

Arab League wants comprehensive review of sanctions on Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid on Tuesday called for a comprehensive review of U.N. sanctions against Iraq, saying the crippling eight-year-old embargo had lasted long enough. "The Security Council should quickly proceed to a comprehensive review of the sanctions imposed on Iraq because the sanctions have lasted long enough," Abdul Meguid told reporters. Abdul Meguid added that the Arab League remains opposed to the use of military force against Iraq "because it would further complicate the situation" there. On Monday the U.S. government said it may still carry out a military strike against Iraq unless Baghdad keeps a pledge to cooperate with U.N. arms inspectors in charge of disarming Iraq.

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Peace deal back on track as Israel accepts Arafat's peace commitment

TEL AVIV (R) — The U.S.-brokered Israeli-Palestinian peace deal appeared to be back on track on Tuesday after Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met Israel's demand to retract warnings over possible renewed armed struggle.

"I reiterate that any problems concerning final-status negotiations will be resolved through amicable and peaceful ways and through negotiations, but not through any other means," Arafat told a news conference.

"We will continue to cooperate to confront any violence and the use of force," he said in remarks which Palestinian officials said had been coordinated with Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had put a West Bank land handover due later this week on hold in the war of words, called the statement a positive step.

"I certainly view in a positive light the statements made by Chairman Arafat," Netanyahu told reporters in Israel's parliament, which was expected to ratify the Wye River Memorandum later on Tuesday.

He welcomed Arafat's commitment to reach a permanent peace agreement with Israel through peaceful means, his rejection of violence, and his pledge to cooperate against violence and terror.

Israel postponed from Wednesday to Thursday a cabinet meeting called to give

the go ahead for the first stage of the pullback, saying it wanted to see if Palestinians had lived up to other obligations under the Wye accord.

A statement from the prime minister's office said Israel wanted assurances that Palestinians had published a decree against anti-Israeli incitement and one against possession of illegal weapons.

But a top Palestinian official said details of the redeployment had been finalized.

"The Israeli government is going to implement the first stage of the further redeployment on Friday," the official, who declined to be identified, told Reuters.

In a radio address to Palestinians on Sunday, Arafat said "our guns are ready" if anyone tried to hinder Palestinian rights in Jerusalem.

The future of Jerusalem, one of the most emotional and contentious issues facing Israel and the Palestinians, is to be decided in so-called final-status talks.

Under the Wye accord, Israel is to hand a further 13 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians over the next several weeks in return for security guarantees and political moves.

The United States, which is trying to keep the accord clinked at the Wye River summit on track, criticised Arafat's earlier remarks and said it would be in touch with the Palestinian president to make its position known.

Israel ready to release first batch of prisoners

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A first batch of 250 Palestinian prisoners due for release under last month's peace accord will be released in the next two days, Israeli Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani announced Tuesday.

"Two hundred fifty prisoners will be freed in the coming two days out of the 750 who must be released under the Wye accord," Kahalani told journalists at the end of a meeting in Jerusalem with Palestinian number two Mahmoud Abbas.

The Wye River accord signed with the Palestinians Oct. 23 requires Israel to release 750 Palestinians in three waves of 250 each over three months.

However, the Israelis and Palestinians disagree over who should be released.

Israel wants to include non-political prisoners, while the Palestinians insist that all 750 must be political detainees, officials said.

The continued detention by Israel of around 3,500 Palestinian prisoners is an issue which provokes enormous anger among ordinary Palestinians.

A series of Palestinian demonstrations were held during the Wye River negotiations to demand the release of the detainees.

The Oslo accords concluded in 1993 and 1995 required Israel to free Palestinian prisoners, but did not specify how many. Israel has since released several thousand prisoners.

But Washington also told

Israel it was obliged to carry out the Wye deal and upbraided Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon for urging Jewish settlers to grab land in the West Bank.

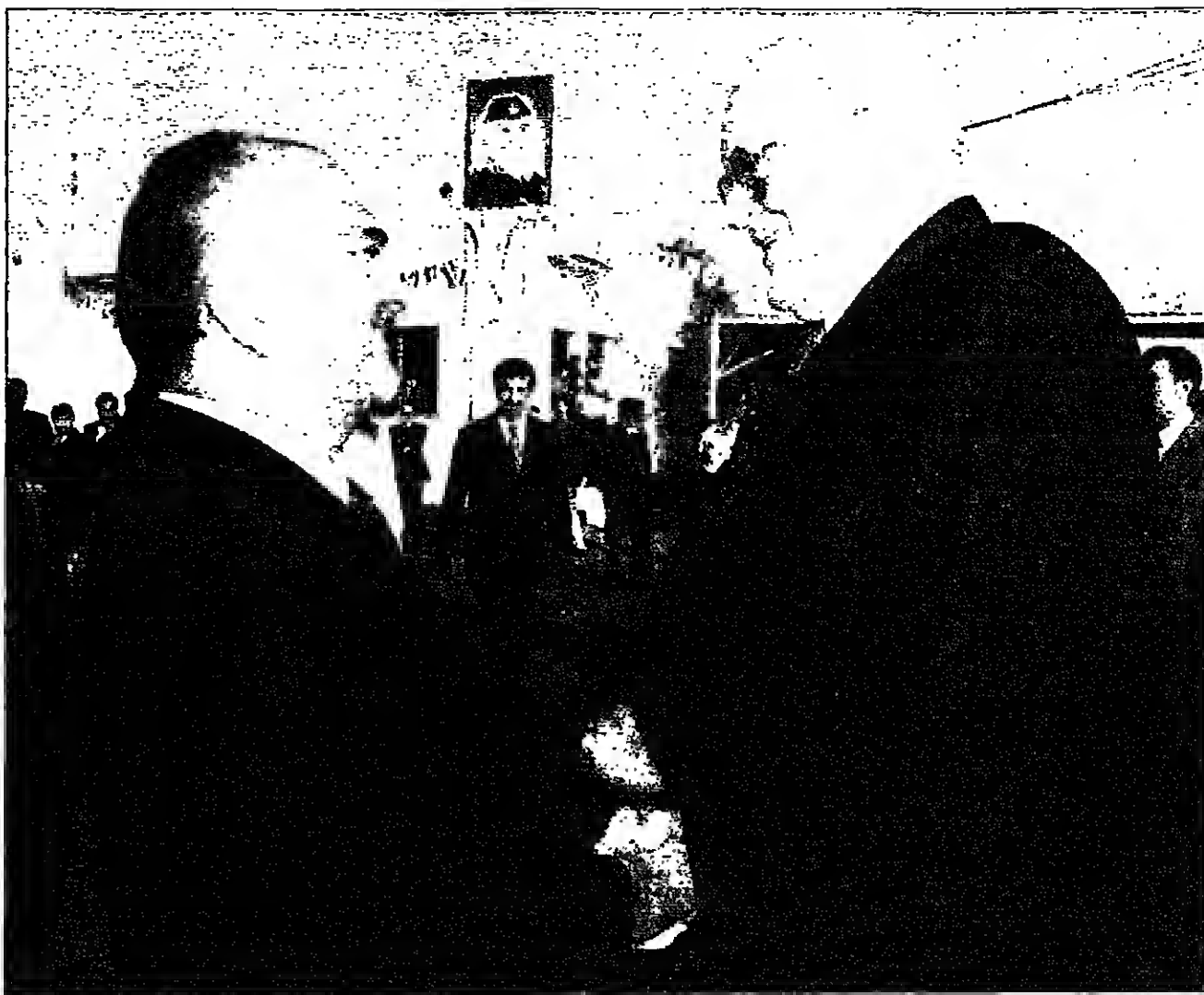
Implementation of the agreement has been delayed over Israeli demands for Palestinian security clarifications and two bomb attacks by Islamists opposed to the accord.

But other signs indicated

the agreement was moving ahead.

Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said he would order the release of the first group of Palestinian prisoners "in the coming days" in keeping with the accord. A PLO official said 250 Palestinians would be released in the first stage.

In the West Bank, the army began fortifying settlements that will abut Palestinian areas after the hand over.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, greets German President Roman Herzog as he crossed the King Hussein Bridge to Jordan on Tuesday (AFP photo)

German president starts visit to Kingdom Regent voices optimism Wye River deal to be implemented according to timetable

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Tuesday voiced optimism that despite recent difficulties, the Palestinian-Israeli Wye River memorandum concluded last month would be implemented according to the set timetable.

"In the spirit of His Majesty's participation and courageous contribution, we will do all we can to ensure that the [Wye] agreement will be honoured," the Crown Prince said at a joint press conference with visiting German President Roman Herzog.

Prince Hassan expressed hope that in the coming few

weeks, statements from either side would not be used by the other as impediments to the implementation of the deal, which broke a 19-month deadlock in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

"But I am deeply convinced — and I have had the privilege to receive visitors from both [the Palestinian and Israeli] sides — that there is a strong commitment to implementation," Prince Hassan said.

"The region cannot afford further delays," he said, adding: "There have been difficulties, but I believe the timetable will be honoured."

The Regent and Herzog were speaking only a few

hours after Palestinian President Yasser Arafat retracted an earlier statement that the Palestinians' "rifle [was] ready" to take Jerusalem.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday used the statement to suspend a long-overdue troop redeployment from the West Bank which was supposed to have been carried out Monday under the Wye deal, but which was rescheduled for later this week.

Herzog, who arrived here on the third leg of a Mideast tour which took him to Israel for talks with Netanyahu and to Jericho for a meeting with Arafat, said his discussions with the Crown Prince focused on

future developments in the Middle East and "what is conceivable once the peace process stabilises."

The two discussed the role that the European Union can play in the region, both before and after peace is consolidated, especially after Germany assumes the rotating presidency of the 15-member EU.

In the same way as the European integration process started with the Coal and Steel Community, the German president said, countries in this region could work towards the establishment of similar bodies in strategic sectors, such as water and tourism.

(Continued on page 12)

Israel probes Lebanon bombing

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's army launched a formal investigation Tuesday into a roadside bombing which killed three soldiers and wounded four others just outside their base in occupied south Lebanon.

A special commission headed by a general was ordered to examine how guerrillas from the Shiite movement Hizbollah were able to place the powerful bomb barely 30 metres from an Israeli outpost and less than 300 metres from Israel's border, officials said.

Israeli newspapers quoted senior military commanders expressing astonishment and outrage over the failure to spot the Hizbollah men, who after planting the bomb fled the subsequent explosion.

"There was a big foul up," a senior officer told the Maariv newspaper.

"It is inconceivable that the terrorists managed to plant a bomb 30 metres from an army outpost in an area constantly under observation," he said.

Other officials said there had been fog in the area the previous night and this had apparently covered the guerrillas' action.

Following the attack, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaffirmed his hope of finding a formula to withdraw Israeli troops from the buffer zone they have occupied in south Lebanon for more than 10 years.

UNSCOM inspectors will start work with routine monitoring

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — U.N. weapons inspectors will resume work in Iraq with routine monitoring and will not immediately launch unannounced inspections, a U.N. spokesman said Tuesday.

An 86-strong team from the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), which is charged with eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, flew back to Baghdad Tuesday following the Iraqi government's agreement to allow unconditional, unfettered inspections under the threat of air strikes.

U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said the inspectors will begin working on Wednesday but it will take time before they resume their full range of activities, which include surprise inspections.

"These personnel will be reopening their offices and they should begin monitoring declared sites in Iraq by tomorrow (Wednesday)," Eckhard said. "Monitoring of declared sites doesn't include anything intrusive. That's their normal daily work."

But Iraq's U.N. ambas-

sador said Baghdad is only bound by U.N. agreements and resolutions, "nothing more, nothing less."

Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoun also set down Iraq's marker for resuming cooperation with the UNSCOM.

"We have committed ourselves to cooperate with UNSCOM provided the work will lead at some point to the end of the story," he said.

The end of the story, as far as Iraq is concerned, is the end of crippling economic sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait — not necessarily the full disclosure of Iraq's weapons programmes that the U.N. Security Council has demanded.

The Iraqi government has maintained for years that it has fully disclosed its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes and the long-range missiles to deliver them.

have warned that Kurdish

Labour Party (PKK) fighters could attempt spectacular attacks to protest at the seizure of Ocalan, who has spearheaded a 14-year campaign for self-rule in Turkey's mainly Kurd southeast, at Rome airport last week.

"A woman terrorist set off a bomb strapped to her body as she was crossing the road outside the gendarmerie headquarters around 9:00 a.m. [local time]," said Tactin Ozgen, local governor of Yuksekova town in southeast Turkey where the bomb attack took place.

Four officers and two

passengers were wounded. The PKK, seeking Kurdish self-rule, had not staged a suicide bombing since a string of attacks in 1996 killed several policemen, soldiers and guerrillas.

Tuesday's attack was part of a wave of protests throughout Europe at the arrest of Ocalan, seized trying to enter Italy on a false passport. It is now the focus of an acrimonious wrangle between Italy and Turkey, which demands he be handed over.

Two Kurds suffered serious

burns after dousing themselves with petrol and setting themselves ablaze in central Moscow. The men unfurled a banner and burst into flames outside Russia's State Duma, lower house of parliament, police said.

Police put the fires out and took the men to hospital. German police said about 4,000 Kurds protested in Bonn against the possible extradition of Ocalan with about 50 of them on hunger strike. They also gathered in Vienna where Demirel was meeting Austrian President Thomas Klestil.

In Rome, 4,000 Kurd supporters from all over Europe

Fateh elects Jerusalem representatives

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Fateh movement has elected Jerusalem representatives for the first time, the Holy City's top Palestinian official, Faisal Hussein, said Tuesday.

Seventeen members were elected to Fateh's executive committee for Jerusalem by 1,500 delegates meeting in the West Bank town of Ramallah because Israel barred them from convening in Jerusalem.

The committee, which includes three women, will

hold its first session Friday. One of the women, Jihad Abu Zuneid, won the highest share of the vote of the 17. She represents the Shuafat refugee camp.

Fateh, founded by Arafat, is the biggest component of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which signed the Oslo autonomy accord creating the Palestinian National Authority headed (PNA) by Arafat.

Israeli police had prevented the Fateh delegates from meeting in Arab east Jerusalem, saying that the Oslo accords

banned the PNA from carrying out political activities in Jerusalem.

"Israel should know that we have opted for peace because it's the best choice, but it isn't our only option," Hussein told reporters.

"If Israel does not fulfil its commitments, we must make up our minds to consider other options," he said.

At the end of the Fateh meeting, the delegates approved a statement saying "Jerusalem will know how to overcome terrorist facts accomplish which

find their deep roots in the Zionist mentality and are expressed by the desire to extend the settlements and Judaize the city."

"Jerusalem is the key to peace and war, and the battle for Jerusalem is that of all Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and faithful throughout the world," said the statement, read by Hussein to reporters.

"To fight the cancer of settlement activity is a sacred duty, because the continuation of this activity will torpedo the peace process," he said.

Kurd suicide bomber dies amid Turkish row with Italy

ANKARA (R) — A Kurdish guerrilla killed herself and wounded six people in a suicide bomb attack in Turkey on Tuesday as Kurds across Europe staged protests linked to the detention in Rome of guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Apparent Italian reluctance to hand over Ocalan for trial on charges of high treason outraged Turkey's government and businesses. Strident press attacks accusing Italy of perfidy have stirred popular anger towards Rome, and business groups have warned of a possible boycott of Italian goods.

Turkish President Suleyman

Demirel, visiting Vienna, said his country could guarantee a "free and fair" trial for the man Turkey holds responsible for more than 29,000 deaths. But Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema said a pledge from Ocalan to work to halt "terrorism" made it easier to grant his request for political asylum, pledging that Rome would not bow to undue pressure to hand him over.

Italy's constitution prevents the extradition of suspects to countries such as Turkey where the death penalty is in force. Turkish security officials

have warned that Kurdish

Labour Party (PKK) fighters could attempt spectacular attacks to protest at the seizure of Ocalan, who has spearheaded a 14-year campaign for self-rule in Turkey's mainly Kurd southeast, at Rome airport last week.

"A woman terrorist set off a

bomb strapped to her body as she was crossing the road outside the gendarmerie headquarters around 9:00 a.m. [local time]," said Tactin Ozgen, local governor of Yuksekova town in southeast Turkey where the bomb attack took place.

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passengers were wounded. The PKK, seeking Kurdish self-rule, had not staged a suicide bombing since a string of attacks in 1996 killed several policemen, soldiers and guerrillas.

Tuesday's attack was part of a wave of protests throughout Europe at the arrest of Ocalan, seized trying to enter Italy on a false passport. It is now the focus of an acrimonious wrangle between Italy and Turkey, which demands he be handed over.

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burns after dousing themselves with petrol and setting themselves ablaze in central Moscow. The men unfurled a banner and burst into flames outside Russia's State Duma, lower house of parliament, police said.

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took the men to hospital. German police said about 4,000 Kurds protested in Bonn against the possible extradition of Ocalan with about 50 of them on hunger strike. They also gathered in Vienna where Demirel was meeting Austrian President Thomas Klestil.

In Rome, 4,000 Kurd supporters from all over Europe

have gathered to hold what has been a largely a peaceful vigil to press for Ocalan's release.

Women wearing multi-coloured traditional dress and wrapped in shawls and scarves mingled with the young who danced to Kurdish music, many holding the PKK flag and banners.

Hundreds of jailed PKK

rebels in jails across Turkey have begun hunger strikes in a show of loyalty for "Apo" as Ocalan is popularly known. Since Turkey forced Syria to oust Ocalan from Damascus last month, 27 inmates have set fire to themselves, and 11 died

of burns.

In Istanbul, Turkish police arrested some 15 Kurdish demonstrators who had briefly taken refuge in an Italian-run church from a crowd of angry passers-by.

Witnesses said the protesters handed themselves over to police at the red-brick San Antonio di Padua church in the heart of Istanbul after a short spell inside the building.

"Damn the PKK, Damn Italy," chanted a crowd of Turks outside the church, a relic of the days when the city had a large Christian population.

Arab League slams Sharon's call to settlers to 'grab' land

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League on Tuesday denounced as "very dangerous" a call by Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon for settlers to "grab" land before it falls into Palestinian hands.

Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid also slammed as "unacceptable" threats by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to suspend Israeli troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

"Statements by Netanyahu and Sharon are unacceptable and very dangerous," Abdul Meguid told reporters here.

"These remarks reflect

the absence, on the part of the Israeli government, of all intention to advance the peace process or establish confidence measures with the Arabs and the Palestinians," he said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat infuriated the Israelis on Sunday by telling a public meeting "our rifles are ready and we are prepared to raise them" to defend Palestinian claims to an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Sharon struck back by calling on Jewish settlers to expand their enclaves wherever possible.

"Everybody has to move,

run and grab as many hill-tops as they can... because everything we take now will stay ours. Everything we don't grab will go to them," Sharon said.

Netanyahu had responded by threatening to suspend the West Bank land transfers promised in last month's Wye River accord, under which Israel pledged to pull out of 13 per cent more of the West Bank.

But earlier Tuesday Netanyahu came back on his threat after Arafat renewed a pledge renouncing the use of force to achieve Palestinian statehood.



PKK SUPPORTERS, NATIONALISTS CLASH IN ISTANBUL: A Turkish policeman Tuesday leads away a Kurdish demonstrator who was beaten by far-right protesters in Istanbul's main pedestrian street. Kurdish and far-right groups clashed after rival protests over the detention of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in Rome (Reuters photo)

\$300 million plan launched to bring Jewish youth to Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — In a bid to strengthen religious identity and ties between Jewish youth and Israel, philanthropists on Tuesday launched a \$300 million programme offering free 10-day trips to Israel for every Jewish teen in the world.

The ambitious programme, Birthright Israel, was launched on the sidelines of a conference here of Jewish American activists and organisers hope to bring the first Jewish teens to Israel in the year 2000.

Private donors, Jewish charities and the Israeli government are "to join

forces in raising \$300 million to finance the first five years of the project, organisers said.

The money will be used to pay for air tickets and 10 days of educational programmes in Israel for Jewish youth between the ages of 15 and 26.

Yossi Beilin, a Labour Party member of parliament and a main architect of the programme, said the aim was both to strengthen the religious identity of Jewish youth in the Jewish diaspora and build new ties between them and Israel.

"They will not all turn into immigrants to Israel

but empathy, links to Israel can be produced," Beilin told interviewers about the project.

Beilin said Jewish youth worldwide would be identified and sent vouchers to cover the cost of the trip, worth about \$3,000.

Advertisements will also be taken out in newspapers and other media announcing the offer.

Starting in 2000, Birthright Israel hopes to begin depositing \$180 into a bank account for every Jewish baby born in the diaspora as a down payment on their future trip to Israel, organisers said.

AI calls on government to end rights violations

AMMAN (J.T.) — Human rights violations have continued in Jordan despite a series of reforms undertaken by the government since 1989.

Amnesty International says in a report launched yesterday which also underlines "a lack of legal safeguards to prevent such violations."

The report, based on a memorandum sent to the government in June 1998, focuses on three main areas: The use of prolonged incommunicado detention against political suspects; restrictions on freedom of expression sometimes leading to the detention of suspected political opponents for non-violent activities;

and reports of torture and ill-treatment of political and common law suspects.

In a statement faxed to the Jordan Times, Amnesty said the report details cases of people apparently arbitrarily detained for political reasons before being released without charge.

For instance, in the month of May 1997, those arrested included fans of heavy metal music, accused of being "satanists" and an Islamist preacher. Though they are normally well-treated, they are often held in incommunicado detention — contrary to international standards ratified by Jordan which insist that detainees have prompt

access to lawyers and family.

Newspapers have long been restricted in their freedom of expression by press and publications laws which have an obscure list of large areas, off bounds to journalists — they include "articles which insult heads of friendly states" and "articles offending the dignity of officials."

Until August 1998, journalists and editors were frequently arrested or harassed by endless court appearances, said the statement.

In January 1998, the Higher Court of Justice declared the restrictive 1997 Press and Publications Law unconstitutional,

but the 1998 Press Law also imposes heavy charges on newspapers and threats of crippling fines which seem equally designed to create an atmosphere of self-censorship.

Amnesty International's report welcomes the government's commitment, in October 1998, not to enforce punitive articles of the law and "to turn a page in relations between the press and the government."

However, the report points out that "as long as vaguely worded prohibitions and punitive articles continue on the statute book, press freedom remains endangered."

Strour, Qoureira discuss parliamentary cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — A Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) delegation led by PLC Speaker Ahmad Qoureira opened talks Tuesday in Amman with Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Strour on cooperation in parliamentary affairs.

Strour reiterated Jordan's readiness to offer assistance and expertise to the Palestinians at the bilateral level and at meetings held at regional and international parliamentary fora.

Strour told the Palestinian delegation that he hoped the two assemblies would be able to forge closer cooperation based on brotherly ties in a transparent manner. The two bodies have a leading role to play at the official and the popular levels in strengthening Jordanian-Palestinian relations, he added.

Strour reaffirmed Jordan's stand in support of the Palestinian people's struggle to regain their legitimate rights and establish an independent state on Palestinian soil.

For his part, Qoureira expressed the Palestinian people's appreciation of His Majesty King Hussein for his support of their drive to regain their rights. He also voiced appreciation of Parliament's backing for the Palestinian people's rights.

Qoureira added that the PLC is trying to benefit from Jordan's parliamentary experiment.

The two sides agreed on intensifying contacts as part of efforts to enhance bilateral relations.

Iranian president strongly condemns terrorism

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami strongly condemned terrorism, which he said had "blackened the face of the 20th century," in a meeting Monday with Finland's Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen.

The official news agency IRNA quoted Khatami, whose country is accused by the United States of sponsoring terrorism, as telling Halonen that the world, including Iran, had suffered greatly as a result of terrorist acts.

Khatami, considered a moderate in Iranian politics, added that any dialogue for obliterating organised violent acts worldwide would have to be with the idea of seeing justice prevail.

It could be undertaken only

after recognising the equal status of all nations as first degree citizens of the world.

Khatami said that because of the presence of terrorism and of other "unjust situations" the current century could apply be called one of unjustified discriminations.

Halonen replied that when it took over the presidency of the European Union (EU), Finland looked forward to broadening relations with Iran as head of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

She also praised Khatami's proposition for designating 2001 the year of dialogue between civilisations, IRNA said.

Earlier Halonen said Iran and Finland would hold a seminar in Tehran in May to

exchange views on human rights, minorities and refugees as part of an effort to promote understanding.

Halonen, who arrived in Tehran Sunday, told a press conference that scholars from the two countries will attend the seminar, but that she would also try to get non-governmental organisations involved as well.

"We'll try to start with easier questions and gradually get to more difficult ones. Our aim is to build up understanding and direct the dialogue towards constructive ends," she said.

In a second round of talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi Halonen reviewed the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan and Iran's initiatives for keeping

regional peace, IRNA said.

Kharrazi called for international pressure to bring to justice those responsible for massacring Iranian diplomats when the Taleban Islamist militia captured the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif last month.

The two foreign ministers also agreed that regular exchanges of opinion should be maintained between Iran and the EU for developing mutual, regional and international cooperation, IRNA said.

The EU has been more or less critical of the Islamic republic's records on human rights and voiced concern over its treatment of some members of religious minorities.

Rights group urges Egypt to halt torture

CAIRO (AFP) — The U.S. group Human Rights Watch has appealed to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to stop the "widespread" use of torture by the security forces.

"We respectfully urge your government to acknowledge publicly that the use of torture in Egypt has reached staggering proportions, and to take firm action to address this grave

human rights abuse" the group said in a Nov. 13 letter to Mubarak, a copy of which was obtained by AFP here on Tuesday.

"No torturer, whether at local police stations in rural areas or state security investigation offices in large cities, should continue to enjoy impunity," the letter said.

Torturers should be investi-

gated and prosecuted for their actions, which violate international and Egyptian law, the New York-based group said in an accompanying news release.

Torture "touches the entire society, irrespective of gender, age, religious belief and political orientation," the release said.

Egyptian police and security forces use torture routinely to

obtain information and coerce confessions in cases involving ordinary criminal offences, as well as in cases of political violence, it said.

Ordinary Egyptians have taken to the streets twice in 1998 to protest against the deaths of family members or neighbours in custody and to demand action against their torturers, it added.

Panel finds SLA in breach of Lebanon truce

NAQOURA (AFP) — An international monitoring committee ruled Tuesday that Israeli forces, or the pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, had violated a 1996 truce agreement by harrasing civilians.

A Nov. 13 mortar round "fired by Israeli

forces or those cooperating with them... impacted in Arab Salim, damaging three houses and a shop in violation of the understanding," the truce panel said in a statement.

The committee also considered an Israeli complaint "concerning the firing of two mortar rounds by a Lebanese armed group

on Nov. 14 in the [civilian] area of Ibea" in southern Lebanon. The monitoring group took note of the Lebanese delegate's statement that efforts have started and will be continued to ensure that attacks are conducted in conformity with the provisions of the understanding," it said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

15:10 "The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin"

15:30 Children's Programme — Halfway to Cross the Galaxy and Turn Left

16:00 French Documentary 16:30 Masters of the Maze 17:00 Doc. — Ushuaia 18:15 Wind at My Back 19:00 Le Journal 19:15 Science Magazine — E-M6 19:30 News headlines 19:35 Comedy — Two Point 4 Children 20:00 Doc. — Envoy Special Magazine 20:30 Drama — NYPD Blue 21:10 Great Moments of Science and Technology 21:30 Faces and Places 22:00 News in English 22:30 Chicago Hope 23:59 Drama — The Ambassador 01:00 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:42 Fajr 06:02 (Sunrise) Duha 11:21 Dhuhur 14:15 Asr 16:40 Maghreb 18:00 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740 Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590 Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366 Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811 St. Aftem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751 Amman International Church Tel. 5865897 German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404 The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932 St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440 Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138 Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146 The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757 The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190 Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679 The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052 The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331 The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology Temperatures are expected to

dip slightly with skies becoming partly cloudy. Rainfall is expected in the northern parts of the Kingdom in the evening and winds becoming westerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 10/21 Aqaba 16/27 Deserts 08/23 Jordan Valley 15/26

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 24, Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 25 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 09/18 Jerash 11/20 Um Qays 09/21 Madaba 09/21 Petra 10/22 Dead Sea 16/27

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Afif Shukri 4898863 Dr. Khalil Ramadan 5358723 Dr. Nidal Dahleh 5827195 Dr. Youssef Naser 4751144

AMMAN: Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730 Mayadah Pharmacy 5337004 Raka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID: Dr. Issam Salih 10224688 Fou'ad Pharmacy 102375360

ZARQA: Dr. Rathi Atallah 109994424 Palestine Pharmacy 109983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111 Civil Defence Department 5661111 Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341 Civil Defence Emergency 199 Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777 Fire Brigade 4617101 Blood Bank 4775121 Highway Police 5343402 Traffic office 4896390 Public Security Dept. 4630321 Hotel Complaints 5605800 Price Complaints 5661176 War & Severe Complaints 4897467 Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111 Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121 Overseas Calls 0132 Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101 Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101 Jordan Television 4773111 Radio Jordan 4774111 Water Authority 5680100 J. Electricity Authority 5815615 Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53300 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN: The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199 The Islamic Abdi 5666131/7 Hussein Medical Centre 5856856 Luzmila 4630195 Khalidi Maternity 464281/6 Akilch Maternity 464241/2 Jubal Amman Maternity 4642362 Malhas, J. Amman 4636140 Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071 Shmeisani Hospital 5607431 Jordan Hospital 5607550 University Hospital 5353444 Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9 Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/5 Al-Bashir 4775111/26 Army, Marka 4891611/5 Queen Alia Hospital 517100 Amal Hospital 5607155 Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital 109983523 Zarqa National Hospital 109900560 Ibn Sina Hospital 109986731 Al Hikma Modern Hospital 109990990

IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital 102275555 Roman Catholic Hospital 102272275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 1027101372, 1027103101 Rosary Sisters Hospital 1027102831, 1027102011 Speciality Hospital 1027103100

AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital 1032014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 14453200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44-52700. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 06:45 Aqaba (add) (RJ) 07:30 Damascus (RJ) 08:35 Jeddah (RJ) 08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ) 11:15 Larnaca (RJ) 15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ) 16:25 London (RJ) 17:05 Paris (RJ) 17:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ) 17:55 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ) 18:10 Istanbul (RJ)

18:15 Rome (RJ) 18:20 Brussels, Berlin (RJ) 23:10 Beirut (RJ) 23:30 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights 09:30 Cairo (MS) 10:30 Jeddah (SV) 12:20 Kuwait (KU) 13:10 Tunis (TU) 13:20 Bahrain (GF) 14:05 Rome (AZ) 15:05 Vienna (OS) 15:30 Algiers (AH) 18:05 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK) 18:40 Beirut (ME) 19:15 Frankfurt (LH) 00:55 London, Damascus (BA) 01:25 Athens (OA) 02:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights 09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW) 16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW) 18:30 Haifa (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

Other Flights 06:30 Larnaca (CY) 07:25 Damascus, London (BA) 07:25 Paris (AF) 10:30 Cairo (MS) 12:00 Medina, Jeddah (SV) 13:20 Kuwait (KU) 14:10 Bahrain (GF) 14:10 Tunis (TU) 15:30 Vienna (OS) 15:30 Rome (AZ) 16:20 Sharjah (AH) 19:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK) 00:35 Amsterdam (KL) 02:45 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights 07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW) 08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW) 16:00 Haifa (arriving at QAIA) (RW) 16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW) 20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES 04:15 Aqaba (add) (RJ) 08:15 Larnaca (RJ) 09:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

Women activists, opposition hold small rally in support of Iraq

By Thaq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Women activists and opposition parties staged a rally outside the Iraqi embassy in Amman on Tuesday to express "solidarity" with Baghdad in the face of "flagrant American aggression" threatening the Iraqi people.

Representatives of the Jordan Women's Association also delivered a written message of support to embassy staff while the small gathering looked on. "It is a symbolic rally... our aim is to give the Iraqi people our full support and to show them that all Arab people are with them," Salem Nahhas, a spokesperson for the leftist Hashd party, told reporters near the embassy's iron gate.

It was the first pro-Iraq rally held in Amman since the latest crisis between Iraq and the United Nations flared late in October.

The rally, closely monitored by police, ended peacefully.

In a written statement distributed to the press, participants called for defending Iraq against any possible U.S. attack and demanded an immediate lifting of U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

"The government's agenda is not similar to our agenda regarding the Iraqi issue," Nahhas said. "We want firm and clear support for our brothers in Iraq."



Women Tuesday display a picture of a sick Iraqi girl outside the Iraqi embassy in Amman. Women activists and members of opposition groups rallied outside the Iraqi embassy to express support for Iraq's sanctions-hit population (Reuters photo)

The government on Monday welcomed the defusing of the latest Iraqi crisis with the U.N. but stressed that the only way for Iraq to get the U.N. embargo lifted was to cooperate with international arms inspectors.

Popular sympathy for ordinary Iraqis remains high in Jordan, but the government, like most world countries, wants Iraq to implement all U.N. resolutions if it wants the sanctions lifted.

Iraq narrowly averted a U.S.

military strike by promising over the weekend to resume full cooperation with the U.N. weapons inspection team.

Women's activist Leila Khalid said the rally was timely because "the crisis between Iraq and the United States is not over. It has just been postponed."

The government, worried that military strikes against Iraq would trigger domestic unrest, said last week it would not tolerate threats to internal stability.

One person died in pro-Iraq demonstrations in southern Jordan in February.

Organisers of Tuesday's rally said they had obtained permission from the government.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadri met with political party leaders this week and told them the government would not allow any pro-Iraq rallies in the event of a military confrontation between Iraq and the United States, political activists said.

Collection centres begin receiving recyclable materials in Amman

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Private societies and the Greater Amman Municipality are joining hands to help recycle garbage along similar lines followed in the West by encouraging households to separate waste before it is collected.

Collection centres in Amman opened last week to receive and pick up recyclable materials and send them to local recycling facilities as part of an ongoing campaign to help protect the environment, conserve natural resources and combat pollution.

The Shmeisani area-based Jordan Environment Society, a project member of a consortium between the Royal Society for the Conservation of

Nature and the Arab Women's Society, receives paper, aluminium, iron, copper and plastic products from all parts of Amman. It also collects such materials from 300 residential and business sites in Shmeisani. The JES provides a cloth bag to these places for their recyclable materials.

Two Amman Municipality offices in Jabal Hussein and Wadi Seer carry out the same activities. The other two societies, along with 50 schools and 70 non-governmental organisations, also receive recyclable materials.

Project Director Hala Obeidi said the plan, funded by the United Nations Development Programme through the New York-based Global Environment Facility, aims at involving

the local community in the project, supporting national industries through encouraging citizens to use recycled materials, providing job opportunities to underprivileged families and promoting public awareness regarding environmental protection in conjunction with 10 conservation clubs.

According to Obeidi, around 70 tonnes of used paper have been collected and 15 tonnes of recycled paper have been reused since the first stage of the project was launched in 1995.

Obeidi said the JD30,000 recycling project would also help solve waste dump problems that are harming the country's environment and minimise energy consumption. Last month, the government,

responding to years of public complaints, said it would relocate the 800-dunum Ruseifeh garbage dump to a new \$25 million site under a gradual process ending in the year 2000.

The dump, originally designed to receive approximately 3,000 tonnes of garbage per day from Amman, Zarqa and Ruseifeh — areas that are home to nearly half of Jordan's 4.2 million population — is working beyond its capacity, posing real threats to the environment.

In April, the consortium of the three non-governmental organisations signed an agreement with the Greater Amman Municipality and the UNDP to expand their recycling programmes.

Members of alleged subversive group retract confessions

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Three more members of a group standing trial on charges of carrying out subversive acts Tuesday retracted their confessions in court, claiming they were extracted under duress.

The three defendants are part of a 13-member group known as "Reform and Challenge." Last week, seven defendants retracted their confessions on the same grounds. The final three alleged

members are being tried in absentia.

During yesterday's session, the defendants, who are charged with possessing, transporting and manufacturing explosives with illicit intent, carrying out extremist attacks and belonging to an illegal organisation, told the court that they were forced to confess "after being subjected to mental and physical duress."

In written testimonies, the three defendants said they

"were innocent and were against terrorist acts that could destabilise the country." They also pledged allegiance to His Majesty King Hussein and the Kingdom.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the defendants formed the "Reform and Challenge" group in 1994 to "change the reality in Jordan." In February, they decided to launch terrorist attacks against government, security and some individuals' properties and purchased material which

they allegedly used to manufacture explosives, it added.

The suspects were arrested in May following a series of explosions and arson attacks. No one was injured in the incidents.

At the end of the court session, the defence team provided the court with a list of evidence they want to present at the next court session. The court, presided over by Judge Yousef Faouri, adjourned the trial until Nov. 22 to consider the defence's request.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Official released on bail

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman prosecutor last week ordered the release of the director general of the National Aid Fund on bail following a three-day detention over alleged financial and administrative violations, according to official sources. Adel Shamaleh was ordered detained by the prosecutor general on Nov. 8, pending further investigations. Shamaleh was referred to the Court of First Instance by Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Mamsar, who reportedly submitted documents proving violations were committed. The Cabinet last week suspended Shamaleh from work until the investigation is completed. The Amman prosecutor has issued a memorandum to all newspapers banning coverage of the investigation procedures.

'Jordan should focus on electronics trade'

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Industry and Trade Tuesday opened a three-day workshop on promoting Jordanian exports to foreign markets and the private sector's role in this area. In an address at the opening session, the ministry's secretary general, Mohammad Halaiga, said the Jordanian market's relatively small size makes it incumbent upon the country's investors to focus on exports. Jordan should focus attention on dealing with electronics-related trade in view of the growing demand for these products and recent developments in international trade, he added. During the three-day workshop, participants will discuss topics connected with exports, export documents, grading and shipping procedures, market selection, export planning and pay settlement, among other topics.

Health Ministry to mark AIDS day

AMMAN (Petra) — To mark International AIDS Day, which falls on Dec. 1, the Ministry of Health will launch a week-long campaign entitled "The Role of Youth in Combating AIDS" on Nov. 25 to raise awareness about the disease. The campaign includes lectures, seminars, radio and television reports focusing on preventive measures.

Children's play on cancer opens next week

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, and as part of celebrations of the King's birthday, the children's musical play "Kind Chemo" will premiere on Nov. 21 at Al Hassan Ben Talal Auditorium at the University of Jordan. A Noor Al Hussein Foundation statement said, "Kind Chemo" is a family musical dealing with a child's brave and successful confrontation with cancer. It is performed by a large cast of young and professional actors, and is being produced jointly by the NHP's National Music Conservatory and the Performing Arts Centre. The revenues of the performances, which will continue for a week, will go to the NHP's Al Im Noor Student Relief Fund to help support the treatment of children with cancer at Al Amal. Queen Noor is the chair of the board of Al Amal, 50 per cent of whose cancer patients are children, the statement said.

what's going on

- FILMS**
- * "Divine pale-boss" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday Nov. 19 at 5:00 p.m.
 - * "Novemberkanten" (The Cuts of November) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 7:00 p.m.
- EXHIBITIONS**
- * Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Balad Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.
 - * Display of Jordan River Foundation (JRF) 1998 autumn/winter collection, entitled "Falling Leaves" at the JRF showroom, Jabal Amman (Tel. 4613081), until Nov. 30.
 - * Crossroads of Civilisations: More Than 100 Years of German Archaeological Activities in Jordan (sponsored by the German Protestant Institute in cooperation with Petra Stone Preservation) at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Nov. 28.
 - * A three-dimensional exhibition on canvas by Susanna Caldwell, Darleen Karpowicz, and Rawabi, Abu Ghazaleh Silawi at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre (Al-Aziz), Jabal Amman, of the Second Circle, until Nov. 20 (Tel. 4647855).
 - * Exhibition of watercolours by Muzakkar Haghdoudja at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 24.
 - * Masterworks of the Spanish Contemporary Architecture and Presentation of Architectural Guide: Spain 1920 - 2000 at the University of Jordan, Faculty of Engineering, until Nov. 20.
 - * Paintings by Jordanian artist Mohammed Abu Aziz at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 28.

Exhibition reviews wide range of German archaeology in Jordan over last two centuries

By Rami G. Khouri

AMMAN — In 1806, nearly two centuries ago, the German scholar Ulrich Jasper Seetzen visited Jordan and "rediscovered" for Western scholars the Greco-Roman cities of Gerasa (Jerash) and Gadara (Um Qais). He documented some of the antiquities in the detailed and methodical manner that is the hallmark of modern German scholarship — and ever since the land of Jordan has welcomed a long and fruitful procession of German scholars who have explored different and increasingly fascinating dimensions of the antiquities of Jordan.

To coincide with the visit to Jordan this week of German President Roman Herzog, a splendid exhibition has been arranged that reviews the work of German scholars in Jordan during the past century and more. The exhibition is well worth visiting by both specialists and lay people, for it simultaneously captures the technical marvels of the many German scholarly projects in Jordan, the increasing relevance of archaeology to the Jordanian economy and well-being, and the ever-present mysteries and puzzles from the past that make the antiquities sector so fascinating and enjoyable.

The exhibition, entitled "Crossroads of Civilisations: More Than 100 Years of German Archaeological Activities in Jordan," is on display at the Royal Cultural Centre until Nov. 28. It has been organised by the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Amman and the German-managed and financed Petra Stone Preservation Project, in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.

The exhibition, logically organised by project, is primarily composed of large, well-printed and designed panels with text, photos and drawings. Interspersed throughout the hall are archaeological artefacts and black basalt stone sculptures that dramatically remind us of the people who produced these objects in antiquity — especially some striking busts of individuals and several handsome stone lintels and tomb doors. The new Nabataean stone busts discovered this year at Khirbet Darieh, south of Wadi Hassa, are on display for the first time ever and are well worth

the trip to see them, along with the other aspects of the exhibition.

The first few panels by the Department of Antiquities and the German Protestant Institute reveal the very wide range of work under way in the antiquities sector, with increasing attention being paid to restoration and conservation of ancient sites, along with the excavations. A photo of the newly restored North Theatre at Jerash also reminds us that ancient sites can be used for cultural and economic purposes today, and that the sites themselves are constantly changing and evolving.

REVIEW

ing under the hand of modern civilisation and the handiwork of archaeologists.

Pioneering work was undertaken in the 19th and early 20th centuries by such German scholars as Seetzen, Gottlieb Schumacher, Rudolph Brunnow and Alfred von Domaszewski, and Gustaf Dalman (some of Dalman's drawing of cultic niches at Petra are on display). German scholarship in Jordan in the modern era was first conducted out of the GPI's Jerusalem office, until the Amman office was opened in 1975 under the directorship of Dr. Ute Wagner-Lux. She had initiated the modern German projects at Um Qais in 1965, and successive German teams have worked there ever since.

The exhibition reviews some of the earliest modern German projects in the 1960s, such as Wagner Lux's work at Madaba and Herbert Donner's study of the Madaba mosaic map of the Holy Land, and covers all projects since the opening of the GPI's Amman office. Um Qais is the largest and most continuous German project in Jordan, and its different aspects are all touched upon (excavation, surveys, reconstruction, museum displays, and others).

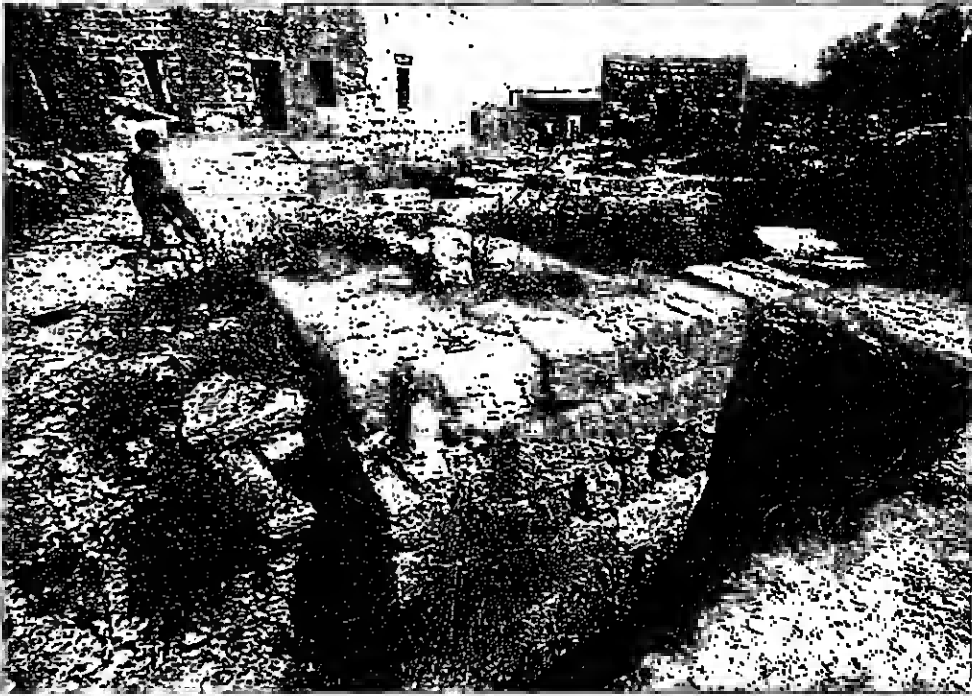
German efforts in the Petra region are fully displayed, including studies of the Nabataean water system, paleo-environmental studies of the greater Petra region in the 7th millennium B.C., and the major new Petra Stone Preservation Project headed by Dr. Helge Fischer.

This ongoing project

brings together the best of German scholarship and technological prowess, for it aims to develop the technical and human expertise in Jordan to operate a permanent centre for the conservation of stone. The first efforts under way comprise the development of an artificial mortar that mimics the properties of the Nubian sandstone at Petra, from which the existing monuments were carved thousands of years ago. This is a fascinating example of how Petra today — as in ancient times — continues to evolve and develop under the influence of the combined efforts of indigenous Jordanians and their colleagues and partners from Western civilisations. The unspoken but clear lesson of this exhibition, perhaps, is that the principles that gave birth to the ancient cultures of the land of Jordan are still valid and operative today — most notably the principle of close cooperation with the people and expertise of other cultures.

One of the striking dimensions of this exhibition is the wide range of projects undertaken with German cooperation. German assistance to Yarmouk University's Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology is one reason that institute has been able to carry out so many field projects (30 of them are identified on one map). A major German-Jordanian project near the university is the dig at Zarqaon, where a major Early Bronze Age town has been unearthed. The large system of underground tunnels at Zarqaon is nicely explained — and the visitor can try and figure out the exact dates of the system, for the scholars themselves have not yet been able to determine when the tunnels were dug and used.

Near Zarqaon is the latest German project at esh-Shal-



Um Qais is the largest and most continuous German project in Jordan (file photo)

laf, where GPI director Hans Dieter Biebert this year started excavating a Neolithic settlement dating back over 7,000 years.

At the other end of the country is the German work at Feinan, in south Jordan, which has stressed the examination of ancient mining and smelting of copper. My personal favourite panel in the exhibition is the one in which German scholars show how the Nabataeans portrayed their deities. Drawings and photos of niches, stone god-blocks, niches and sanctuaries bring this subject to life, and reveal new areas of scholarly investigation where German individuals and institutions are active in Jordan.

Other projects that are covered in the panels include the study of the Chalcolithic and Middle Bronze Age small villages at Abu Snesleh, south of Amman, and German work at Tell Juhfayeh, Balu'a, Ba'ja, Zarqa, Basta, and the Aqaba area. The German Archaeological Institute has

also worked closely with the GPI in some cases, and their projects in other countries (Lebanon, Syria, Yemen) are mentioned in one panel.

The exhibition is accompanied by four lectures at the Goethe Institute in Amman, and has been organised with the support

of the German Embassy and German Foreign Office, the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, and several individuals and other international archaeological institutes in Amman, with support from several German and Jordanian companies.

The children, families and staff of the International Community School (Khaldia) send their best wishes to His Majesty King Hussein on the occasion of his 63rd birthday



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BBC denies World Service broadcasts to be cut

LONDON (R) — The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Sunday denied it was poised to make swingeing cuts in the World Service and said it was still in discussion with the government about its future format.

The denial followed a lengthy report in The Observer newspaper that the BBC had finalised plans for major cutbacks in the broadcast service, including the closure of its German and Czech operations.

The Observer said the cuts were part of a three-year plan to slash £21 million (\$35 million) from the budget.

Broadcasts in Hungarian, Russian, Arabic and Thai would also be slashed and 100 jobs would go, it said.

The newspaper said it had obtained secret BBC documents detailing proposals drawn up by World Service chief executive Mark Byford to cover a shortfall in funding from the Foreign Office, which finances the service.

But the BBC called the report inaccurate.

"The picture painted by

The Observer is inaccurate, misinformed and misleading. The plan's main aim will be focus on investing in key developments utilising the government's financial settlement in the most effective manner in order to maintain the World Service's position as the world's leading international operator," it said in a statement.

Last July, the government announced plans to increase the £161 million grant it pays to the World Service over the next three years by around £45 million. But the settlement fell short of the BBC's bid for a £65 million increase in funding.

Any major cuts in services are likely to spark a political row, especially since Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has made no secret of the need to defend the World Service.

A Foreign Office spokesman Sunday said talks were continuing between officials and the BBC but said he could not comment on the details.

"Discussions going on are on the World Service's

plans on how to spend the money from the settlement," he said.

The Observer said the plan would be presented to the BBC's board of governors Thursday, to Cook Friday and parliament's public accounts committee on Feb. 3. A formal announcement will be made by Feb. 7.

It said one of the BBC documents it had obtained was a media plan on how best to sell the idea of the cuts.

This said the key lies to take would be the need for "a reallocation of priorities" and to stress that "the World Service is changing, in response to audience needs and a highly competitive international broadcasting environment".

The row will also bring yet more ire on the head of Director-General John Birt, already under attack for many of his strategies to modernise the BBC.

The World Service is one of the world's most popular international broadcasters with news broadcasts in 45 languages and an audience of 124 million worldwide.

Myanmar offers to be 'gentle' with opposition

BANGKOK (AFP) — Fearing Myanmar military intelligence chief Khin Nyunt has promised to be gentle and lenient with the opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi, a U.S. congressman just back from Yangon said Sunday.

Representative Tony Hall said he met Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt last week in Yangon to discuss the plight of the Myanmar people as the economy labours under international sanctions and an investment drought.

Khin Nyunt "promised to be gentle and lenient to the opposition and try to find areas of agreement despite recent rhetoric carried in government newspapers," said Hall, who did not attempt to interpret the statement.

The Democrat congressman from Ohio said however that he had seen no sign the government was prepared to make concessions in its bitter eight-year political battle with the opposition.

U.S. diplomats in Yangon said it was the first such statement by the military government, Hall reported.

It remained far from clear however if it was intended as a genuine expression of tolerance towards the opposition.

In recent months, thousands of National League for Democracy (NLD) members have been held by the government, and many

have resigned from the party on their release.

Hall said he handed over a list of political prisoners compiled by the NLD to the government, which "is" accused by foreign nations and human rights groups of serious and prolonged human rights abuses including torture, forced labour and imprisonment without trial.

The NLD last week said it would sue Khin Nyunt for "destroying" the party and intimidating its members into resigning. The party won a landslide victory in 1990 elections, but the junta has refused to cede power.

Hall, who also held talks with Nobel peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, warned that as politicians squabbled in Yangon, people were suffering from malnutrition, water borne diseases and one of the worst AIDS problems in the world.

"There is an old saying in Burma (Myanmar) that 'when the water buffalo fight the rice dies,' which means when the political people fight, the people essentially get trampled and I think that's happening," he said.

He warned against political interference in aid work, saying that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were deterred from Myanmar fearing their independence could be compromised.

"Unfortunately many

NGOs and government agencies see consultations with any political party, even one as legitimate as the NLD, as the start of a slippery slope and in a world of hurt there are so many other places NGOs can go to work," he said.

Hall rejected the idea that Aung San Suu Kyi should be given a veto on any disbursement of aid under a proposed U.N.-backed plan to reward political change in Myanmar starting with humanitarian assistance.

"I would not say that she should have veto power at all, because once you start to do that and you start to have a precedent then you are going to have problems in other countries and that precedent should not be started in Burma."

Some reports have suggested Aung San Suu Kyi would hold a veto to prevent the junta backing out of concessions made to win aid. While praising Aung San Suu Kyi as holding the "heart of many people in the country," Hall cautioned that foreign lobby groups should not forget humanitarian issues as they campaign for human rights.

"Burma is a noble cause, but it is also a country of 48 million people who need help, and I challenge the activists for human rights to work hard to meet people's humanitarian needs," said Hall, who also visited Laos during his trip.



Residents light candles to offer prayers for victims of the Kobe earthquake at Koya Pond Park near Kobe, western Japan, the eve of the fourth anniversary of the quake. The 1995 earthquake killed more than 6,400 people and left tens of thousands homeless (Reuters photo)

Kobe remembers killer quake as misery goes on for thousands

TOKYO (AFP) — The Japanese port of Kobe remembered Sunday the 6,430 people killed in a massive earthquake four years ago, as some 6,000 families continued to live in makeshift shelters.

Although its skyline has been restored with new high-rise buildings and giant port container cranes again dot the landscape, the city of 1.4 million people is now deeply split over a plan to build an offshore airport.

In a nationally-televised address at a memorial service, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi noted that the Kobe area was also hard hit by Japan's worst post-war recession "although reconstruction of main infrastructures and facilities has been completed."

The premier said it was an urgent task to find permanent housing for 5,841 families still living in temporary barracks.

The number has dropped sharply from the November 1995 peak of 46,617 families, but 1,200 still have nowhere to go when those small frame houses are closed in late March.

Hyogo prefecture, of which Kobe is the biggest city, has built public housing units for 34,500 families

and a further 7,500 will be completed soon.

"The government for its part will continue making efforts to help the area rehabilitate as soon as possible," Obuchi said.

The premier acknowledged the lack of "comprehensive anti-disaster measures," and pledged "all-out efforts to create a society people in which people can feel safe to live."

The government came under fire for being slow in sending in help when the killer quake, registering 7.2 on the Richter scale, crushed the industrial and commercial belt without warning.

Most of the dead were crushed to death in collapsed buildings or killed by fires — and some 44,000 people were injured, 8,800 of them seriously.

The cost of reconstruction was then estimated at \$77 billion (\$9 billion euros).

The nation's economic crisis has left 5.8 per cent of Hyogo's workforce jobless, higher than the national average, according to the Bank of Japan.

"As we go on, we want to cherish warm people-to-people contacts and live a strong and contented life to make up for the

regretful losses of my parents and more than 6,000 others."

Naotoshi Tatenuma, a 28-year-old survivor, told the memorial service.

But the unity of the people appears to be in jeopardy as the city is forging ahead with a nine-year-old plan to build an airport on a man-made island.

Kobe city hall has ignored some 310,000 signatures calling for a referendum on the \$27 billion project.

Critics say it poses environmental and financial hazards and could not compete with two existing airports in nearby Osaka.

The economic downturn has also led to a record 807 bankruptcies in the prefecture last year, according to a private credit research agency.

Before the quake, Kobe handled 30 per cent of Japan's international container traffic, with 30 foreign cargo ships docking there every day. Around 2.6 million containers passed through the port in 1994.

Last October, the handling volume was down about 10 per cent from the previous year and down some 30 per cent from the 1994 level.

U.S., North Korea resume talks on suspected nuclear site

GENEVA (AFP) — The United States and North Korea resumed talks here Sunday over Washington's demand to inspect an underground site it suspects is being used to revive the hardline communist state's nuclear weapons programme.

North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Kye-Gwan, leading the talks for Pyongyang, said big differences remained between the two sides.

"Yesterday the U.S. and North Korean sides stuck to their original positions," he said.

The U.S. negotiating team, headed by special envoy for Korean affairs Charles Kartman, arrived at the North Korean mission at 10:15

a.m. (0915 GMT).

The two sides held more than six hours of talks Saturday at the U.S. mission.

The talks are aimed at saving a 1994 agreement under which North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear programme in return for aid and the easing of Korean war-era sanctions.

North Korea, which says the site is for undisclosed civilian purposes and that to inspect it would be a violation of its sovereignty, has demanded that Washington pay \$300 million to take a look.

Washington has rejected the demand and warned Pyongyang it must prove compliance with the 1994 Agreed Framework.

Under that accord, a U.S.-led consortium agreed to replace North Korea's risky graphite nuclear reactors — which produce weapons-grade plutonium — with safer light-water models.

The United States also agreed to supply 500,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil to North Korea annually to help with its energy needs until the reactors come on stream.

However, in August a U.S. spy satellite spotted activity at an underground complex at Kumchangri near Yongbyon, where North Korea's mothballed nuclear reactors are located. U.S. officials suspect the site could be used to produce plutonium for nuclear arms.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chavez arrives in Cuba for summit on Colombian peace process

HAVANA (AFP) — Venezuelan president-elect Hugo Chavez will meet with the presidents of Cuba and Colombia here Sunday for informal talks on the Colombian peace process. Chavez arrived in Cuba Saturday, saying "I am the friend of Colombia." Both Chavez and Cuban President Fidel Castro have indicated they are prepared to facilitate peace talks between the Colombian government and leftist guerrillas. Negotiators for the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas have been meeting since Jan. 7 in a remote Colombian jungle town in an effort to end the bloody four-decade conflict that has claimed 120,000 lives. Pastana, who is on a three-day official to the Communist island, is here to discuss what role Castro, who has agreed to be a moderator, will play. This is Chavez's second visit to Cuba. His first was in 1994, two years after he led a failed coup attempt in Venezuela. Venezuela shares a 2,000-kilometre border and \$2.5 billion yearly trade with Colombia.

Leaders of Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda expected at Congo summit

WINDHOEK (AFP) — The presidents of Zimbabwe, Uganda and Rwanda were expected here Sunday to attend a mini-summit on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a Namibian official said. However, the leaders of the DRC, Angola, Chad and Zambia, will not be at the meeting organised by Namibian President Sam Nujoma, the presidential official told AFP. Nujoma announced the mini-summit Friday, saying the intention was to convene the Kinshasa government and its allies — Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola and Chad — and DRC rebels who began an uprising last August, with their backers, Uganda and Rwanda. The Namibian foreign ministry said in a statement that "consultations among the core group of countries which are militarily involved in the war in the DRC" were expected to start at 3:30 p.m. (1430 GMT). Zambia, which has been mediating in peace talks, was due to have attended. The Windhoek gathering comes the day after a meeting in Lusaka of foreign and defence ministers from 15 African countries, who failed to finalise the terms of ceasefire to end the five-month-old war. The presidential official here said that DRC President Laurent Kabila and Chadian President Idriss Deby were "not invited" and presidents Frederick Chiluba of Zambia and Jose Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola had declined the invitation. This meant only Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Rwanda's President Pasteur Bizimungu were expected to come to Windhoek for the meeting.

Religious persecution harming U.S.-Laos ties, congressman says

VIENTIANE, Laos (AP) — Religious persecution remains a major hurdle preventing the United States from granting trade concessions to Laos, a U.S. congressman said Sunday. Tony P. Hall, a Democrat from Ohio, said he made this clear in meetings with top leaders of the Communist government during his three-day trip to the Southeast Asian nation. "It's a major stumbling block preventing the U.S. Congress from approving Most Favored Nation (MFN) status for Laos," he told reporters. Hall expressed displeasure with the detainment of eight Laotians who were imprisoned in February last year for worshipping at an unauthorised Christian service. Authorities initially arrested 44 persons at the service, but immediately deported three Americans in the group and released all but the eight Laotians in attendance. Hall said freeing the eight would send a "big signal to Congress" that Laos was willing to move on the issue of religious freedom. During his visit, which ended Sunday, Hall also travelled to southern Laos to inspect a crash site where remains of U.S. servicemen killed in action were found recently. He praised efforts by the Laotian government to help resolve the fates of more than 400 servicemen missing in action (MIAs) in Laos, describing it as central to America's "greatly improved" ties with the small, landlocked nation over the past four years. Most of the MIAs were pilots who carried out one of the most intensive bombing campaigns in history as they tried to prevent North Vietnamese soldiers and supplies from reaching South Vietnam through Laos.

Chinese company adopts name 'Viagra' for its pill

BEIJING (R) — A Chinese company plans to capitalise on the international success of Viagra this month when it markets its own anti-impotence drug — under the same name. A branch of Feilong (Hong Kong) Group plans to begin selling its self-developed treatment "Weige Kaitai" on Jan. 25 in the northeastern city of Shenyang, the China Daily said Sunday. "Weige," literally meaning "great man," is the familiar Chinese translation for Viagra. Viagra, the diamond-shaped blue pill manufactured by U.S. drug firm Pfizer Inc., has not been legally approved yet for sale in China, but already has earned a reputation through local media as a miracle cure for erectile dysfunction. "Viagra ranked alongside 'Titanic' as the best-known new English word in China last year," the China Daily said. Nearly 600 Chinese men are taking Viagra in clinical trials as health authorities evaluate the drug for import. The government has said it would announce a decision before the end of the year. In the meantime, the Chinese drug maker has a head-start on tapping the country's vast market of sexually frustrated men. "The existence of the Weige Kaitai pill will certainly influence the sales of Viagra in China if it is approved for import," the article quoted an official with the Trademark Office as saying. Jiang Wei, the Chinese drug's inventor and general manager of the Feilong Group, said he did not know of any challenges to his registration of the Weige Kaitai trademark, according to the article. His pill would sell at \$1.45 each, while "real" Viagra is available on China's blackmarket for as much as \$48, the newspaper said.

Farmer executed in China for Buddha statue theft

BEIJING (R) — A farmer was executed in China Friday for stealing a priceless statue of Buddha two years ago, Xinhua news agency reported. In a report late Saturday, Xinhua said Gao Yunliao was executed in the central province of Henan. He and three accomplices were alleged to have prized the one-tonne statue from its stand in the famous Longmen Grottoes in March 1997. The report said the figure was broken into three pieces as Gao and his partners loaded it on to a truck before they buried it at the farmer's home. Gao's accomplices received prison sentences, it said, adding that the statue had been restored and was back on display. At least 1,876 people were executed in China in 1997, more than the rest of the world combined, according to the human rights watchdog Amnesty International. Death sentences are usually carried out with a single bullet to the head, although lethal injection was being introduced. The Longmen Grottoes are filled with thousands of images of Buddha and his disciples were carved in cliff walls between the 5th and 7th centuries.

Tamil leader ends self-imposed exile in India

COLOMBO (AFP) — A Sri Lankan Tamil leader who fled to India after issuing an ultimatum to the government here demanding greater autonomy has returned home ending his self-imposed exile, Tamil sources here said Sunday.

A. Varadaraja Perumal, the chief minister of the north-eastern provincial council, received protection from India which backed his council that was eventually sacked by then Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa.

Perumal had warned he would unilaterally declare independence in the island's north-east within a year unless the government granted promised powers to the semi-autonomous regional administration.

With the withdrawal in

March 1990 of Indian troops deployed in Sri Lanka's north-east in line with a bilateral peace pact of 1987, Perumal's leftist Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) was also driven out.

The EPRLF is opposed to Sri Lanka's dominant Tamil separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The EPRLF is a mainstream political party after having given up separatist demands but currently has no representation in parliament.

Indian authorities who had also backed the EPRLF together with several other Tamil political parties which supported the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka accord, provided tight security to Perumal Ajmir in India's Madhya Pradesh state.

Tamil sources said it was not immediately clear why Perumal had decided to end his exile. However, the move came within three weeks of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's state visit to India.

Kumaratunga's slain husband had been a keen ally of the EPRLF which until 1987 was fighting Sri Lankan government forces demanding a separate Tamil state. Later, the EPRLF settled for regional autonomy.

Tamil politicians here also speculated on the possibility of Perumal accepting an high profile job within the government but there was no official word either from the administration or from his party about the former chief minister's plans or whereabouts.



A meteor streaks across the night sky (upper right) over Rio de Janeiro early Nov. 17. As the Earth passed through debris trailed by the comet Tempel-Tuttle, a four-kilometre wide cloud of dust and gas called the Leonid shower, sent thousands of particles hurtling towards Earth in the most spectacular meteor shower in 32 years. Scientists said that hundreds of satellites would be endangered of being sandblasted, as particles could punch holes or create 'plasma discharges' that could fry delicate circuitry. The particles collided with the Earth's atmosphere at speeds of 72 kilometres a second, giving a small grain the destructive force of a .22 caliber bullet. The particles, however, burned up long before they could threaten anything on the ground (Reuters photo)

Mass exodus as Asia awaits spectacular meteor storm

BANGKOK (AFP) — A mass exodus was under way from Asian cities Tuesday as thousands scrambled for a smog-free view of a meteor shower expected to send a barrage of shooting stars streaking through the heavens.

From the Great Wall of China to pollution-choked New Delhi, stargazers were expected to peer upwards as the fiery tail of the Tempel-Tuttle comet sent volleys of meteors into the Earth's atmosphere.

The show is expected to be particularly dazzling this year, as the comet passes closer than normal at its 33-year cycle.

At its peak at around 1800-

2000 GMT Tuesday, up to 10,000 meteors an hour will arch across the sky, experts said.

The meteors, named Leonids because they appear to emanate from the constellation Leo, will hurtle towards the Earth at 71 kilometres a second.

Forecasters, however, warned that cloudy weather or street lights in some areas of Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Bangladesh and Thailand could obscure the view.

Heavy traffic was reported on roads out of Bangkok as thousands headed for northern national parks, police reported.

Tourism officials welcomed the astronomical windfall which

packed camp sites and hotels in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces.

But the shower could be missed in southern Thailand as the meteorological department warned of flash floods brought on by a tropical depression.

"The sky will not open due to the depression. People will not have a chance to see the Leonids shower," said a spokesman.

Meteor fever also swept Taiwan, where tens of thousands of cars snaked around winding roads up to the scenic spot of Yangmingshan.

Tens of thousands of people travelled to central and southern Taiwan where hotels were crammed to overflowing.

Television reports said

astronomers had already detected more than 500 meteors over southern Taiwan's Mount Ali early Tuesday.

But thick clouds brought on by cold fronts blocked almost all stargazing in the north of the island.

Early sightings were also made in three eastern Chinese cities Monday night, the official Xinhua news agency said. "I witnessed a number of fireballs, or shooting stars, which were bright enough to illuminate the faces of observers at the station," said Zhu Jin, a leading astronomer at the Beijing

Astronomical Observatory's Xinglong Station. More than 300 shooting stars were reported in Hong Kong early Tuesday.

Europe presses ahead on defence but direction unclear

ROME (AFP) — Defence and foreign ministers from 28 countries Tuesday agreed to accelerate progress to give Europe a bigger role in ensuring its own security, but made little progress towards deciding how to achieve this.

After two days of talks under the aegis of the Western European Union (WEU), the ministers issued a statement calling for "further steps to enhance European military capabilities to deal with crises," like Bosnia or Kosovo.

They also expressed their "determination" to ensure that the WEU, the only exclusively European defence forum, plays a role in organising peacekeeping or other crisis-management tasks.

The talks however left unresolved the long-running debate over whether the WEU should be brought fully under the control of the EU, as France, Germany and Italy want, or simply abolished with its political functions transferred to the EU and its military role taken over by NATO, as Britain would prefer.

The possibility of progress on these issues is

seen as having increased after Britain's announcement last month that it had dropped its long-standing opposition to the European Union developing a military role.

Outlining the new British thinking here, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook insisted that London had not ruled out an EU-WEU merger.

But he stressed that it was the development of a "demonstrably effective" military capacity rather than institutional changes which would determine whether Europe became capable of acting decisively in crises where the United States is unwilling to get involved.

Total defence spending in the 15 EU countries is roughly two thirds of the level of that in the United States, he said. But, because of poor or non-existent coordination, their combined capability is nowhere near this level while European military research spending is a sixth of U.S. levels.

In a move designed to address these problems, the ministers approved a "masterplan" designed to pave the way — at an unspecified

point — for the creation of a European Armaments Agency which would be charged with ensuring that defence procurement policies in the different EU countries were complementary.

They also signed a memorandum of understanding that extends an existing programme of research and technology cooperation involving 13 of the European NATO members to include Finland and Sweden.

Belgium's Foreign Minister Erik Derycke said that the European allies willingness to take the lead in organising a NATO force to ensure the safety of international observers was a sign of a new dynamism among them.

"Perhaps it was not such a bad thing that the U.S. refused this time to step in," he said.

While most of the ministers here stressed the need to avoid a costly duplication of tasks between the WEU and NATO, a majority underlined the political importance of Europe having a military capacity that was independent of the United States.

As long as negotiations aimed at giving the Europeans greater influence within NATO and bringing France fully into the alliance's military wing remain stalled, the WEU is the only vehicle for this, Derycke said.

The problem for the WEU's supporters is that has never proved whether it is capable of doing anything. Although it has been building up an operational capacity since 1991, it has to date only carried out minor operations such as helping to police the arms embargo on Bosnia and training policemen in Albania.

WEU officials say that, if EU governments had the political will to use it, the WEU could run an operation involving up to 15,000 troops — a claim which Britain in particular is highly sceptical about.

The talks here involved the 15 European Union countries, 10 of whom are full WEU members, and the remaining European NATO countries: Iceland, Norway and Turkey. Ten eastern European countries which are due to join the EU attended as observers.

Indian PM lashes out at opposition conspiracies

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Tuesday charged that the main opposition Congress party was destabilising India by plotting to topple his government.

"The success of Congress party's conspiracy to create instability will be disastrous for the country," the Hindu nationalist leader said at an election rally in the northern Indian city of Kota.

Vajpayee said it was "unfortunate and condemnable" that the Congress was using its campaign for upcoming elections in New Delhi city and three states to "destabilise"

his seven-month-old federal government.

The prime minister also accused the opposition party of creating an "artificial panic," which recently led to a 1,000-per cent hike in the price of table salt.

"Also, its treacherous criticism of India's nuclear policy demonstrates that the party's confrontationalist posture has blinded it," he said in a reference to nuclear tests conducted by his government in May.

"I have never played the cynical game of power in my long stint in politics and public life. Today I am prime minister by virtue of

the people's mandate."

Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) has accused the Congress and Communists — traditional bitter rivals — of forming an alliance of convenience to bring down the government.

"The Congress has joined hands with the Communists, with whom it has nothing in common except a lust for power," the prime minister said.

Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born Congress president, rejected Vajpayee's allegations.

"We are not greedy for

power. If we had lust for power we could have formed the government. But we do not want to get power through unscrupulous means," Gandhi told a Congress rally in the city of Ajmer.

The Congress is under pressure from other opposition parties to make a bid for power after the elections, which are widely seen as a referendum on the Vajpayee government.

The nationalist government survives in office with the help of numerous small allies, some of which are reportedly being wooed by the opposition.

Serbian president to stage talks despite Albanians' refusal

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Serbian President Milan Milutinovic pressed ahead Tuesday with efforts to hold peace talks with rival Kosovo Albanian officials despite their refusal to meet with him.

Serbian government sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Milutinovic will travel Wednesday to Kosovo's capital Pristina on a mission the ethnic Albanians have dismissed as a publicity stunt.

Milutinovic wants to chair

direct talks with the ethnic Albanians, with international officials in attendance but not as mediators.

The ethnic Albanians refuse to talk without U.S. and European mediation, saying only foreign countries could guarantee that an eventual agreement would be implemented by the Serbian government.

They have turned down 16 such invitations in the past six months, prompting Serb authorities to show up at the pre-arranged site anyway to try to show their sincerity and the ethnic Albanians' lack of cooperation.

The Serbian government says

the troubles in Kosovo, where hundreds of people have died and tens of thousands were left homeless in its crackdown against secessionists, are Serbia's internal matter and should not involve foreign mediators.

Ethnic Albanian leaders said Milutinovic's call for talks is a part of Belgrade's effort to reduce international pressure on Serbia to find a peaceful solution to the Kosovo turmoil. They said ethnic Albanians support peace talks, but not under Serb conditions.

U.S. envoy Christopher Hill, who has been shuttling between Belgrade and Pristina to reach a

compromise peace plan, was to meet representatives of the Albanians' rebel Kosovo Liberation Army in the province Tuesday, guerrilla sources said.

Adem Demaci, a guerrilla spokesman, praised Hill's decision to meet the KLA commanders. "Rugova can sign anything, but there could be no deal without KLA consent," Demaci told reporters in Pristina, speaking of Kosovo Albanian political leader Ibrahim Rugova.

Commenting on Milutinovic's scheduled talks, Demaci said "it's a bluff intended to say that Albanians don't want dialogue and thus deserve to be beaten by force." The militants have refused any compromise with the Serbian government, demanding outright secession for Kosovo.

Rugova also advocates independence but is willing to negotiate a possible three-year interim period during which Kosovo

would regain the autonomy stripped by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in 1989.

Serbian state-run media reported Tuesday that Milosevic's ruling Socialist Party gave full support to Milutinovic in his attempts to hold the talks.

But the opposition Democratic Party said Milutinovic's call for talks is "the sowing of mist" aimed at fooling the public at home and abroad.

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Literacy in the information age

JORDAN HAS long been proud of its records in literacy and education, which according to international NGOs, are some of the highest in the region. Even still, illiteracy still stands at 13 per cent, according to Ministry of Education statistics. This is a cause for concern as Jordan blazes towards the Information Age with nearly daily developments and improvements in our communications industry.

It has therefore been reassuring to hear that the government has again reiterated its commitment to maintaining its achievements in education by pursuing several action plans to further boost literacy by the turn of the century.

It indicates that the government has noted a crucial tenet of progress: Information, and access to it, is now, more than at any time in history, the strength of any society's socio-economic development.

However, considering all these factors, there is a glaring incongruity in the government's education and information policies.

By pursuing ever better rates of literacy and ever higher standards of education, the government de facto is encouraging the pursuit of information and knowledge, while at the same time, it has created a press and publications law specifically designed to limit Jordanians' access to the information they vitally need to sculpt their future course of political, social and economic development.

Jordanians are inundated daily with messages and images from the Internet, satellite television, foreign magazines and newspapers. They travel, and a thriving foreign community lives among them. All of these factors contribute to Jordanians' literacy and education.

As the government and its departments move towards greater decentralisation and as our educated society moves towards global integration, we need more information — volumes more — not less, particularly information and news that concerns our own society.

It is, then, no small irony that in Jordan, the sale of newspapers, the least expensive and most consumed printed material, has dropped. We have to ask ourselves: Is this a matter of literacy, or is it simply the sign of an educated, but disenchanted, public? And if it is the latter, we must ask, why should we continue to bother with education and literacy at all?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Mahmoud Rjmawi said Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon's recent call for Israeli settlers to expand their settlements was supported by the whole Israeli government. Rjmawi quoted Sharon as telling settlers that "all that you can take will be yours." He said Israel's government views the peace process as a chance to expand settlements and strengthen discriminatory policies in contradiction to all international treaties and U.N. resolutions. Sharon is instigating settlers to "steal more lands," the writer stated. At the same time the Israeli government, forgetting its own actions, believes that the declaration of a Palestinian state contravenes the peace treaty. Israel, in fact, is the true representative of terrorism, regardless of the U.S. point of view, Rjmawi said.

Al Dostour's editorial said the Wye Accord is in danger because of Benjamin Netanyahu's stubborn policies and his suspension of the two per cent withdrawal. This indicates that Netanyahu is trying to imitate American policies on Iraq, especially that he is now asking for Palestinian National Authority President Yasser Arafat's apology for his recent statement about the declaration of a Palestinian state. These developments coincided with the Israeli government's discussion of the deal, which was already facing strong opposition in the Israeli cabinet. Netanyahu believes that the Oslo Accords are national catastrophes for Israel, thus, the possibility of ever achieving any progress in the peace process are weak.

Washington Watch

Campaign against chemical weapons must be consistent

Dr. James Zogby

LAST AUGUST the United States destroyed a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant mistakenly suspected of producing chemical and biological weapons (CBW).

The United States is poised to launch missile strikes against Iraq because of that regime's suspected CBW programme. This aggressive policy to combat the spread of deadly weapons of mass destruction ignores, however, what appears to be a substantial CBW programme in Israel.

During the past month, a few scattered press reports have presented both dramatic evidence and strong suggestions of Israel's efforts in this field. Since all of the revelations have either appeared in the mainstream Israeli press or been confirmed by official Israeli sources, they can not be dismissed as mere propaganda.

First was the October 1st admission by the Israeli government that its El Al cargo plane that crashed into an apartment building in 1992 did in fact carry a sizeable shipment of deadly Sarin gas components. This admission confirmed the revelations of a report that had appeared in a Dutch newspaper.

The 1992 El Al crash resulted in the death of 43 people. But in the past six years at least 1,200 residents of the crash site's neighbourhood have complained of mysterious illnesses including skin disease, birth defects and cancer. There were a number of mysterious events that occurred immediately after the crash, including the presence of suspicious investigators dressed in what were

described as "space suits." These "investigators" were not involved in rescue operations, but were seen removing evidence from the plane. This evidence has never been located.

In an effort to get to the bottom of this mystery, the Dutch newspaper pieced together the evidence that remained and discovered the presence of 800 pounds of uranium and substantial amounts of three of the chemicals needed to make deadly nerve gas.

It was only after this revelation, that the Israeli government offered its admission. The Dutch Parliament has ordered a full inquiry to determine whether their government participated with the Israelis in a cover-up of this incident.

A few days later the Sunday Times of London reported that Israeli military sources confirmed that "Israeli assault aircraft have been equipped to carry chemical and biological weapons." They identified the site where these weapons were produced as the same location where the cargo of the crashed El Al plane was to have been delivered.

The article went on to note that the Israeli plant "manufactures not only chemical and biological weapons for use in bombs, but for more unusual weapons as well." The article quoted an Israeli source as noting that "there is not a single known or unknown form of chemical and biological weapon which is not manufactured" at the site.

One of these weapons was identified as the poison that

was used in the 1997 assassination attempt against Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al.

One other bizarre and even more disturbing weapon apparently developed at the Israeli plant was identified in an October 29th Jerusalem Post report as a so called "ethnic bullet." This is a biological weapon that claims to be designed uniquely to effect the genetic system of Arabs.

It was claimed to have been developed in cooperation with South African scientists who during apartheid sought to design a similar weapon that would only effect blacks. While this story cannot be verified, it is precisely the fact that there are no inspections of Israeli facilities despite significant evidence of CBW development that allows stories such as this to cause great concern.

All of this evidence highlights a serious problem that can not be ignored. Israel has signed but never ratified the international convention against chemical and biological weapons and its scientific facilities, like its nuclear installations, have never been open to international inspections.

This evidence that Israel has developed and weaponised CBW and in the case of Khaled Misha'al, has actually used such weapons ought to receive greater international attention than it has up until now. It is only logical to assert that to be effective and credible any international effort to rid the Middle East of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction must be universal and consistent.

They seek them here, they seek them there...

By George S. Hishmeh

A STARTLING little bit of information here amidst the high drama surrounding the near terror promised Iraq this past weekend by the United States and Britain is that UNSCOM, the controversial U.N. agency in charge of scrapping Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, has not been able to find on its own any additional weapons since the 1991 Gulf War.

The Republican vice presidential nominee, Jack Kemp, said in a public statement last Friday that he and his staff "can find no evidence of UNSCOM documentation" of further weapons finds.

Robert D. Novak, the prominent conservative American commentator, reported that he had asked the State Department spokesman earlier this month "whether it was accurate that no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq since just after the Gulf War ended and that those discovered at that time were disclosed by Iraqi officials."

James P. Rubin asserted then that the weapons inspectors "have found more weapons of mass destruction in the seven years since the Gulf war than were destroyed during the Gulf war."

But writing in his column on Monday in the Washington Post, Novak insisted "that is almost untrue" and added that when he again asked Rubin about Kemp's statement of last Friday Rubin "cited specifically only the weapons pointed out by the Iraqis in 1991, though he added that he had been assured there have been other discoveries."

Martin Indyk, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, also maintained at a briefing for the foreign press here on Monday that UNSCOM's unpublished failure was "not true," and assured the writer, "and to give you the

most recent example, the discovery of VX (nerve gas) on warhead fragments is an example of the kind of work that UNSCOM is able to do in terms of tracking down what Iraq has done with its WMD (weapons of mass destruction) programmes."

Naturally Indyk skipped over the doubt cast by tests in France and Switzerland which could not substantiate the questionable findings by American lab of traces of VX gas on some destroyed Iraqi warheads.

The role of UNSCOM has also become controversial after the resignation of chief inspector Scott Ritter, a former American Marine, who admitted that he had contacts with Israeli and American intelligence during his work in Baghdad for the international organisation.

President Clinton and the State Department quickly came to the defence of UNSCOM on Monday, but they did not actually assert that it was the U.N. inspectors who had found these alleged stocks of biological and chemical weapons-making materials. Rather, Clinton reported that "since the system was created and the inspections began, Iraq has been forced to declare and destroy, among other things, nearly 40,000 chemical weapons, nearly 700 tonnes of chemical weapons agents, 488 operational missiles and 30 warheads especially fitted for chemical and biological weapons, and a massive biological weapons plant equipped to produce anthrax and other deadly agents."

Foreign diplomats privately ridicule UNSCOM's inability to find any weapons in the past seven years and some have wondered aloud whether it may take the U.N. commission another 50 years to complete its job.

A week ago as a matter of fact, the New York Times quoted senior American officials as saying that the Clinton administration "is preparing to abandon the United Nations inspections regime as an effective instrument for restraining" Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Even in a recent testimony before Congress Defence Secretary William Cohen underlined the difficulties facing the U.N. mission, pointing out that a few inspectors could not possibly find concealed weapons in a country the size of several American states in the north-east.

The near consensus here before the American and British military build-up was on traditional containment through sanctions.

Again when the futility of sanctions was pointed out to Indyk at the press briefing by this writer as is the case with Cuba which has faced nearly 40 years of U.S. sanctions without any discernible change in the Communist regime a few miles from the Florida Keys, Indyk admitted that "loosening Saddam's grip on power is a daunting challenge" blaming it on "his ruthlessness, and because his regime is so repressive."

Indyk went on, "and that's why we're realistic about this, and believe it will take some time."

He also conceded that "the sanctions have had the effect of hurting the Iraqi people" but with the oil-for-food programme, which is expected to be renewed shortly, he argued that "sanctions could be maintained until there was full compliance."

If so, it should not come as a surprise to the Clinton administration if it finds that it will have to go it alone on the issue of sanctions, which actually have been eroding for some time. Take the case of the new ferry service between Dubai and Iraq, the growing trade with India, Turkey, Iran and Syria.

sanctions have killed more than 10 times that number.

Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, in a Nov. 11 letter to Sir John Wesson at the Permanent Mission of U.K. to the U.N., calls the sanctions "a violation of the Genocide Convention."

He goes on to say "the notion that Iraq is a threat to the region is a false fantasy created by the U.S. to justify its vast military presence in the region, to dominate the oil resources and to contain Islam."

Others, such as Halliday, have pointed out that the sanctions violate the Geneva Convention — which prohibits the starvation of civilians as a means of warfare — as well as the Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

And what of Washington's duplicity? "Israel occupies territory illegally for thirty years, it violates the Geneva conventions at will, conducts invasions, terrorist attacks and assassinations against Arabs, and still, the U.S. vetoes every sanction against it in the U.N. Syria, Sudan, Libya, Iraq are classified as 'rogue' states. Sanctions against them are far harsher than against any other countries in the history of U.S. foreign policy. And still the U.S. expects that its own foreign policy agenda ought to prevail," wrote Columbia

Best wishes

To the editor:

HAVING LIVED in Amman in the past year, and visited twice, we just wanted to convey our very best hopes and wishes for His Majesty King Hussein's good health, happiness and a long and prosperous life. He is a wonderful King and a wonderful person, beloved by his people, and we respect and admire him very much. We wish King Hussein and the wonderful country and people of Jordan peace and prosperity.

Mrs. JC Noel & Mr. Mark Noel
Piscataway, Mississippi
U.S.

A little hypocritical

To the editor:

THE NOVEMBER 15th edition of the Sunday Times reported that Israel is developing a genetically engineered virus or bacterium specifically designed to kill Arabs. Jews exposed to the same germs would be left unaffected due to their unique genetic makeup.

This research is being carried out at Israel's main biological weapons research facility at Nes Tziyona. As no weapon can be used without first being tested on one of the Israeli prisoners as test subjects. Doesn't this make America's tirade about Iraq a little hypocritical since America's \$6.2 billion a year subsidy of Israel is financing this criminal research?

Ethnic cleansing, land theft, germ warfare, and planned racial genocide are all evils the United States opposes unless Israel does it!

Christopher Calder
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Eugene, OR 97401
U.S.

A generation sanctioned to death

By K. Shreeram

EVEN AS Washington and London prepared to bomb Iraq, the ritual human sacrifice of Iraqis continued unabated. Corpses continue to pile up, victims of Washington's cynical and duplicitous policies in the Middle East.

The statistics may be old but now, the dead are not — more than 250 people, mostly children under 5, die each day because of sanctions, according to a UNICEF report released in April. More than one-and-a-half million faceless, nameless, and relatively unreported brown people have been killed by the sanctions imposed in 1990. That's about 5 per cent of Iraq's pre-sanctions population. In percentage terms, that is equivalent to about 13 million dead Americans. The World Food Programme says more than 1.2 million Iraqi children died due to the embargo between August 1990 and August 1997 — a generation sanctioned into non-existence.

The per capita income of Iraq has gone from \$2,900 a year to \$60 a year. A can of powdered milk costs as much as one month of a doctor's salary. Surgery is conducted routinely without anaesthesia. Sanitation facilities are abysmal. Fifty per cent of the rural population does not have access to potable water, compared to a 92 per cent access rate in 1990. The majority of Iraqis has been on a semi-starvation diet for the last few years, according to the World Health Organisation. Infant mortality has increased six-fold since 1990. The once exemplary and free public health system has been decimated. Inflation has increased astronomically. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the price of wheat flour in August 1995 was 11,677 times higher (1.16 million per cent) than in July 1990. Crime has skyrocketed.

"This is a town where people used to leave the key in the front door, leave their cars unlocked, where crime was almost unknown. We have, through the sanctions, really disrupted this quality of life, the standard of behaviour that was common in Iraq before," said Denis Halliday, who in September resigned his post as co-ordinator

of the U.N. oil-for-food deal in Iraq.

Writing in the New Internationalist earlier this year, Felicity Arbuthnot describes a little incident she witnessed in Iraq: "In a small grocery store in a poor area of Baghdad early

'In a small grocery store in a poor area of Baghdad early one morning I watched a child of perhaps five... proudly doing a terribly important errand: he bought one egg. A tray of 30 eggs exceeds a university professor's monthly salary... As he left, the child dropped the egg. He fell to the floor, frantically trying to pick the shell, yolk and white, with his small hands, tears streaming down his face.'

one morning I watched a child of perhaps five, in the mode of small children everywhere, proudly doing a terribly important errand: he bought one egg. A tray of 30 eggs exceeds a university professor's monthly salary... As he left, the child dropped the egg. He fell to the floor, frantically trying to pick the shell, yolk and white, with his small hands, tears streaming down his face. As I reached in my pocket, the shopkeeper gently tapped him on the shoulder and gave him another."

The list is endless.

The loss of life caused by the sanctions has made Saddam Hussein's human rights record virtually pale into insignificance. Amnesty International estimates that Hussein's regime killed 130,000 people between 1979 and 1989. In eight years, the

sanctions have killed more than 10 times that number.

Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, in a Nov. 11 letter to Sir John Wesson at the Permanent Mission of U.K. to the U.N., calls the sanctions "a violation of the Genocide Convention."

He goes on to say "the notion that Iraq is a threat to the region is a false fantasy created by the U.S. to justify its vast military presence in the region, to dominate the oil resources and to contain Islam."

Others, such as Halliday, have pointed out that the sanctions violate the Geneva Convention — which prohibits the starvation of civilians as a means of warfare — as well as the Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

And what of Washington's duplicity? "Israel occupies territory illegally for thirty years, it violates the Geneva conventions at will, conducts invasions, terrorist attacks and assassinations against Arabs, and still, the U.S. vetoes every sanction against it in the U.N. Syria, Sudan, Libya, Iraq are classified as 'rogue' states. Sanctions against them are far harsher than against any other countries in the history of U.S. foreign policy. And still the U.S. expects that its own foreign policy agenda ought to prevail," wrote Columbia

University Professor Edward Said, in Al-Hayat newspaper in London.

And, speaking of the weapons of mass destruction that Washington claims ad nauseam to be so concerned about, a U.N. General Assembly committee on Tuesday, Nov. 10, voted 134 - 2 asking Israel "not to develop, produce, test or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons, and to renounce possession of nuclear weapons," and to sign the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). The two countries voting against the resolution were Israel and the United States.

And in the wake of admissions by UNSCOM chief Richard Butler that U.N. inspectors had shared intelligence information with Israel, and allegations last week by a British MP that five UNSCOM inspectors were undercover Israeli Mossad agents, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak flatly refused to endorse military strikes against Iraq.

"There is not a single Arab country which backs a recourse to force against Iraq, and all are preoccupied by the lot of the Iraqi people," he told Egyptian Ministers of Parliament Tuesday, Nov. 10.

But Washington's hypocrisy, of course, neither begins nor ends with Israel. This is a country that was the only one to have ever dropped a nuclear bomb on human beings, a country that is the world's largest stockpiler of weapons of mass destruction, and one that has over the last 50 years installed and supported some of the most murderous dictators the world has seen. To bear officials of this country speak self-righteously of the need to eliminate Iraqi weapons and Iraqi violations of international law should turn anyone's stomach.

But historic amnesia and a history-starved populace guarantee settled stomachs in the United States even as that government's policy ensures that, a world away, little food makes its way into the hungry mouths of brown children with shrunken bellies who will join the dead before they have had a chance to live.

The writer is former news editor of the late New York Guardian.

East Timor troop withdrawal proves to be fiction

Indonesia made a big deal in July about withdrawing troops from the occupied territory of East Timor, bringing a plane-load of foreign journalists in for the occasion. But was the withdrawal merely a public relations exercise?

Andrew Perrin is an Australian journalist, who has spent the past two months in East Timor.

TO THE military commanders of the Indonesian Armed Forces in East Timor, July 28 was a red-letter day.

On that day, in a perfectly-executed public relations exercise, a large delegation of foreign journalists was flown in from Jakarta to witness the "goodwill" withdrawal of 1,000 troops from the docks of Dili, the capital of the territory. The withdrawal, the assembled media were told, was the first stage of a gradual reduction in troop numbers promised by Jakarta, as a signal to the international community that it was committed to finding a peaceful solution to the 23-year-old dispute over the territory.

Never mind that only 398 troops were withdrawn that day. When they arrived back in Jakarta after a night of official Indonesian functions in Dili, the foreign press — with few exceptions — reported that 1,000 troops had been withdrawn, as the press release had stated. The journalists were promised that the rest of the troop reductions would occur in the following month.

That never happened. Indeed, less than two weeks after the "withdrawal," villagers in the coastal settlements of Comma and Lautem in the east heard the soldiers coming back. In the dead of night, after arriving on a big barge, around 20 trucks full of commandos and marines were seen crawling up the hill towards the Los Palos township. A few weeks later, further east along the coast in Lore, another shipment of heavily armed troops arrived. Reports of the landing quickly filtered through the porous Timorese community and onto the Internet, but it was too late to stop the perception in the international community that Indonesia was withdrawing from East Timor.

But by September, the perception began to change. The reports became more pronounced and evidence of increased military activity was

visible on every street corner in Dili, and throughout the countryside.

In the military command headquarters in Dili, however, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and perhaps encouraged by their success in hoodwinking the international community in July, officials maintained their position to journalists and visiting ambassadors that there had been no build-up of troops, that no combat troops existed in the province, only territorial battalions, and that troop withdrawals continued to take place.

But a secret military document leaked in late October put the precise numbers of Indonesian troops in East Timor at 17,834 troops and confirmed the continued presence of combat troops: 7,938 of them.

Colonel Tono Suratman, the armed forces commander in East Timor told me in October that 10,600 troops remained in the territory, a reduction of 1,400 since July. This line was consistently trotted out by the central government in Jakarta. "This is the truth, the absolute truth," the commander said.

As proof, he invited me to visit Battalion 315, responsible for the entire central region of East Timor and based in Manatuto, about 60 kilometres east of Dili.

My day spent with 315 was the kind of carefully choreographed public relations exercise for which the Javanese are justly famous. In the morning, with the Battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Sanusi Abastari, 40, from Java, we visited one of the 78 military posts under his command. These posts are found in every village and town in East Timor. Their official role is to provide security to the villagers from the rebel forces, and to assist the villagers in matters of health, education and agriculture. Rarely is the latter function carried out, and security is more to do with monitoring the movements and actions of the local people to ensure they do not provide assistance to the rebel forces.

In a day of high farce, the commander told me his region had never had trouble with the rebel forces, a statement I knew from my own

sources to be questionable. Yet this did not stop him employing a convoy of three trucks filled with heavily armed soldiers dressed for combat to ride before and behind his jeep, itself equipped with a high-powered machine gun and with three of the battalion's sharpshooters clutching M16s on the back.

When we arrived at the village, the whole town had surrounded the military post, seemingly spending their leisure time there. "You see," said the commander, "the people see the soldiers as family. If they want the posts to be removed I would move it. But they always ask me to keep it here."

One old man who was brought forward said, "I do not want the soldiers to go. If they go, the rebels (Falintil pro-independence fighters) come and kill us." The battalion doctor was then brought out, distributing medicines and advice to the sick and the elderly, saying, "I come here every week giving medicines."

A few weeks later, I returned to the village unaccompanied and heard a different story. The villagers said they had been rounded up 30 minutes before the commander and I arrived, and told to congregate at the military post.

In the house closest to the military post, not 10 metres away, a woman's two baby children were in the final stages of malaria, days away from death. She had never seen the doctor in the village before.

The villagers alleged the troops positioned in the military post spent the day sleeping, and the night patrolling the surrounding area. "They are not territorial," said one man. As I left the village, a few of the people shook my hand with a clasp and a clench — the covert Falintil handshake.

As recently as October 12, when tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets to protest against a military offensive against Fal-



East Timorese demonstrators on the streets of Dili, the capital city, calling for a referendum on the future of East Timor (file photo)

intil fighters, Colonel Suratman said the demonstrators were wasting their time, that there was no offensive and no build-up. But the protest, which received wide coverage in the international media, had made its point.

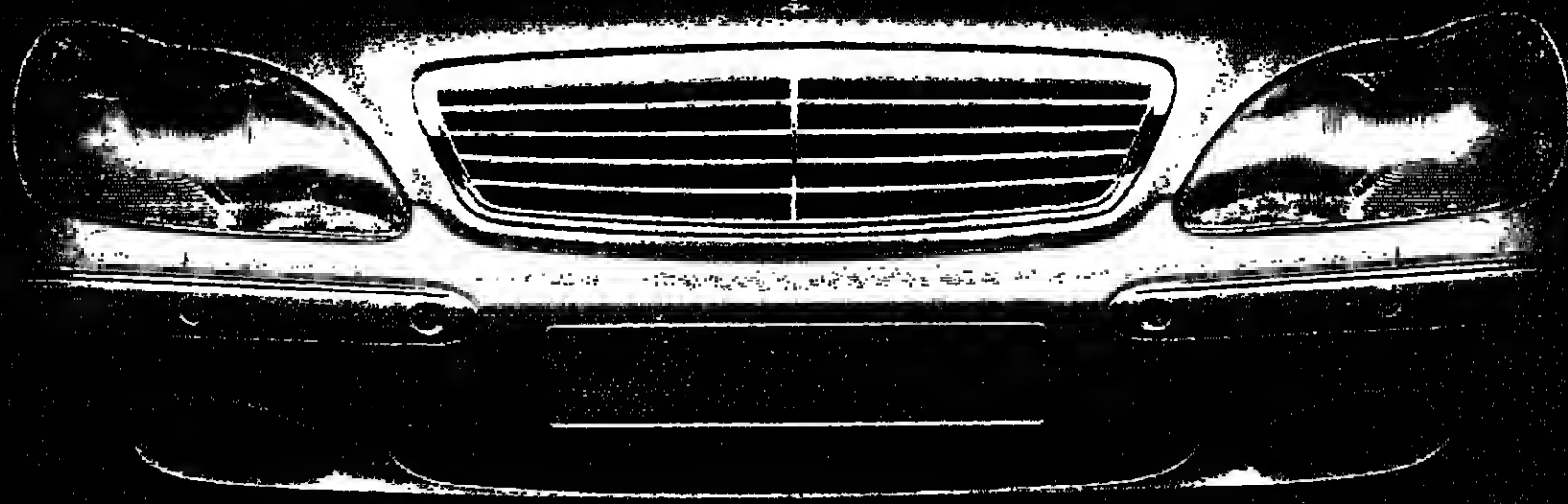
U.N. Secretary-general Kofi Annan called for a substantial reduction in Indonesian troops and an end to all military activity in the province. The leaders in Jakarta and commanders in East Timor ducked for cover, less convincingly running the same line on troop withdrawals, perhaps hoping the issue would go away. The leaked document has put it back into the spotlight.

Many here believe the military promotes

divisions between the Timorese, and that a fair solution to the problem, whatever it may be, cannot be found while the high military presence remains.

The Indonesian government has some explaining to do in front of the international community: Is it serious about finding a peaceful and democratic solution to the vexing question of East Timor, as it has repeatedly stated? Or is this position merely a smoke screen to gain favour and, at the same time, provide the time it needs to destabilise the strong pro-referendum voice in East Timor?

— Gemini News



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Daily Beat
A review of news from the Arabic Press

Ministry of Industry and Trade preparing a national industrial policy for Jordan

THE MINISTRY of Industry and Trade is currently preparing a national industrial policy which will be based on general principles of economic openness, privatisation, globalisation, signing the European partnership accord and joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Examining such a policy in a study, the director of industrial development at the ministry said the general principles would offer many opportunities and pose many challenges. "The public and private sectors should deal with them (principles) with efficiency to make use of the opportunities, face the challenges and optimise the use of natural resources in order to achieve high productivity and quality," the study said.

The director, Ahmad Hindawi, said the lifting of protection enjoyed by local industries should be gradual. He added that reducing customs duties on industrial inputs should come before reducing customs on the final products noting that the focus should also be on long-term policies.

Hindawi indicated that governments cannot predict the fluctuations in markets in the long-term and stressed that "creating a high competitive capability for national industries is a long-term process that requires continuous efforts in all human and technical capabilities."

The study formulated a futuristic view for the industrial sector in Jordan by highlighting the highly qualified human resources that the Kingdom enjoys. It mentioned that the infrastructure is complete and integrated with an encouraging technological structure and that there will be an inflow of local and foreign investments as a result of having a very attractive business environment.

A number of technical committees and work teams have been formed to focus on each industrial sector separately and to pinpoint the problems it faces in order to take them into consideration when designing and preparing the national industrial policy (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Association of dentists moves to enforce discipline in practising the profession

IN AN unprecedented move, the association of dentists has asked the Ministry of Health to close a number of dental clinics and issued warning to others within a campaign to rectify the status of the profession and to stop the phenomenon which the association described as "inferiors to the profession."

In a press statement, the president of the association said the board "has noticed that a number of unlicensed clinics were being set up and that some dental technicians were treating people at their homes without referring them to dentists." As such, he added, the association has found it necessary to counter such practices and put an end to chaotic behaviour (Al Dustour).

Egypt needs to deepen bond market — analysts

CAIRO (R) — Egypt needs to diversify the types of bonds it offers and issue them regularly to develop its bond market as an investment tool, analysts say.

"I'm not happy at all with the bond market here. It is in everybody's interest to see an increasing trading volume in bonds in Egypt," said Mostafa Assal, head of the fixed income desk at EFG Hermes Securities Brokerage.

"In any normal market, trading in bonds exceeds or at least equals trading in equities. In our market this is not the case," he added.

The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) puts the value of trading in bonds from the beginning of 1998 through Nov. 12 at 969 million pounds (\$285 million), compared to 380 million pounds in all of 1997.

The value of trading in shares was 13.6 billion pounds in the same 1998 period compared to 19.9 billion in all of 1997, the CMA said.

Adrian Swinscoe, an economist at the Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies said the bond market had not developed at the same pace with its equity market because the latter was spurred by the privatisation process, which is part of economic reforms that began in 1991.

"The government had more pressing concerns at the time," he said, adding that more urgent issues for the government in early 1991 were fixing its own finances and dealing with new fiscal and monetary policies.

But now the government was beginning to focus on developing the bond market as another investment vehicle and a source of potential finance.

The Finance Ministry offered its first bonds this year in August when it issued 500 million pounds treasury bonds with seven years maturity. A central bank official said any further bonds would be issued based on need.

Assal said it was up to institutions, the state and the central bank to develop the bond market and that more government bonds with different maturities were needed.

"Only through the combined efforts of these three players will this market grow. There's no magic solution," Assal said.

"For institutions, a liquid bond market is a means of both investment and finance. The market has a lot of potential for issuing more corporate bonds," he added.

Private sector banks and firms have already issued bonds.

Last year Commercial International Bank offered a 300 million pounds bond and Citibank a 200 million pounds bond issue.

Lakah Group recently issued a 250 million pound bond in Arab Steel Factory and a 50 million pounds bond in Suez Company for Metallurgical Industries would be issued in three months.

Medhat Sobhi, a financial consultant with Lakah Group, said bonds have helped "refresh" the Cairo stock exchange but the bond market was not yet fully developed.

"If the bond market is starting to mature now," Sobhi said, "There are some tax benefits for bond purchasers. Bonds also offer coupon rates that are higher than bank deposit rates, which creates a beneficial saving tool."

Orascom Projects and Touristic Development company (OPTD) issued in July an 80 million pound bond offer with 11.5 per cent interest rate. "A 100 million pounds issue with 11.2 per cent interest rate is in the offing," said an executive from OPTD.

Nidal Assar, head of Arab Bank's capital market desk, said Egypt needed "bond funds" to trade solely in bonds because mutual funds allocate 60 to 90 per cent of their portfolios to equities.

"This would offer a less risky investment for individuals and will create more liquidity in the bond market," he said.

Previously, with a limited supply of bond issues, he said: "Investors focused more on the equities market due to the leap it experienced between end 1996 and February 1997."

Also, banks and institutions who bought bonds used to hold on to them due to the tax shelter they offered. "But with recent changes in the tax law, to a certain extent, it puts some constraints on tax privileges by bonds and treasury bills," he said.

Intercapital Securities fixed income analyst Ashraf Ghazali said Egypt's bond spreads were too large. "For any new bond issue a larger allocation should be offered to individual investors rather than big institutions to increase liquidity."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You might feel like you don't have enough money and power. Assess your situation, perhaps with the aid of a financial counsellor, and you might find there's more money available than you thought. There are lots of ways to get it, many of which you've never heard of. Don't get stuck making it's hopeless.

TURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like your mate or partner wants to call the shots right now. He or she has things pretty well thought out, so if the plan is to your liking, just relax and go with the ride. You want to stand up for your most important assets, but there's no point in squabbling over the little stuff.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) We've got some very demanding people out there, and you're going to be working overtime trying to keep up with them. If you're in the communications field, you may be just about at your wits end. Listen instead of talking and you'll save yourself a lot of trouble. You may not get time to talk much, but it'll still be an improvement.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Looks like you're in love, but we've got other work that needs to be done. So there could be a bit of a conflict. The emotional aspect is going along quite nicely, however. You always do better in conditions like these, even if you have a problem, your chances of finding a workable solution are excellent.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you're like most Leos, you're based on public matters most of the time. Right now, however, it's private matters that claim your attention. Spend time with the people you love. There are decisions to be made, issues to be talked out. Best to do that now. Later in the week, it'll be difficult for people to express themselves.

SCORPIO: (August 22 to September 22) The conditions in effect right now won't happen again for another year. The sun and you are both in Scorpio, and you are absolutely brilliant. You're soaking up information, so don't miss this chance to learn something very important. If you don't know what that is yet, ask for a minute. What would you really like to know?

SAGITTARIUS: (September 23 to October 22) You sometimes give more than you should of your own allotment, so other people won't be upset. Well, today that's not likely to be the case, so if you have negotiations to do concerning your career, step up to the plate right now. You'll negotiate in your own favour, for a change, and you'll do it well.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're strong, powerful and charismatic. People want to do what you tell them to do. In fact, one person in particular is willing to do just about whatever you ask. Be responsible. You don't want to burn this one out by being too demanding. Money could be coming your way, too, but take care. There are strings attached.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're under pressure again today, but the other person can't really ruffle your feathers, since what he has to offer isn't anything you want. You're satisfied with what you've got, and that makes you a hard nut to crack. You don't have to put up with pressure tactics, either. With the help of a good friend, you can make your escape.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Group activities look like they're going to go pretty well today. You might think it's impossible to actually get this crowd to do what you want, but that's not the case today. The people you're hanging out with have a lot of energy and a lot of good ideas. Just get them steered in the right direction.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There's a lot to be done, and orders to be followed. It's going to be difficult to push your ideas across again today, but that's OK. You're listening and learning instead, and watching for a good opportunity. That could come as soon as tomorrow, so make sure you have all your ducks in a row.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Are you tired of your same old environment and want to get out of your rut? Do you want to buy a boat and cruise around the world? You'd probably be good at that. Start learning how to sail. Take a few lessons. You don't need to do the whole thing now to have the exciting part start.

Birth Stone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

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Papin calls it a day

PARIS (AFP) — Jean-Pierre Papin, one of the greats of French football, announced his retirement from the game on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old striker, known affectionately in France as "JPP", won 54 caps for France, scoring 30 times. Often he partnered Eric Cantona up front.

His career goals tally in club and international games was 326, 181 of them for Marseille. A small but quick and athletic player who specialised in acrobatic overhead kicks, he was the top scorer in the French league for five seasons.

After a six-year spell with Marseille he moved to AC Milan before stints with Bayern Munich, Bordeaux and, finally, French second division side Guingamp.

The son of a footballer from Boulogne-sur-Mer in northern France, he was in the French side that finished third in the World Cup in Mexico.

Other successes included two Italian league titles with AC Milan and their European Champions Cup win in 1994.

He also won the UEFA Cup in 1996

with Bayern Munich although by then injuries were beginning to slow him down.

Michel Platini described him as "a strong personality with only one aim — to score goals."

Gerald Houllier, the current Liverpool coach who was in charge of France in 1992-93, said: "He became an exceptional striker, the sort that you don't see nowadays. I hope he will now start teaching the young to help French football progress."

Jansher drops out of world squash open

KARACHI (AFP) — Former squash world champion Jansher Khan of Pakistan said Tuesday he had pulled out of the World Open Squash Championship because of a groin injury.

The championship is scheduled to start in Qatar November 29.

"My groin injury has healed up and I am feeling much better, but on doctor's advice I have decided not to play in the World Open," Jansher told AFP.

Jansher said he was confident he would bounce back, saying "everyone will see when I regain my place, with Allah's blessings."

The 29-year-old underwent surgery on both knees in July and hopes to be fully fit in three weeks' time.

"I would love to play for Pakistan for three more years and will regain my top place in 1999," Jansher vowed.

The six-times British Open champion lost his world number one ranking to Scotland's Peter Nicol last February and subsequently his British Open crown to Nicol in April.

The eight-times world champion, now sixth in the rankings, did not participate in last year's world open in Malaysia due to personal reasons. Australian Rodney Eyles won the world title.

South Korea gymnasts out of Asian Games

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean women's artistic gymnasts have been withdrawn from next month's Asian Games after four competitors failed drug tests, officials said Tuesday.

The Korea Gymnastics Association (KGA) also fired three coaches of the squad for the Bangkok Games.

"We decided to withdraw the women's artistic gymnastics after four of our six athletes tested positive for banned diuretics," So Jung-Ho, an KGA spokesman, told AFP.

The four were banned for two years. They were found to have used diuretics during fresh drug tests two weeks ago for all South Korean gymnasts and

swimmers.

The tests were carried out after a swimmer and two gymnasts failed earlier tests. The swimmer was also banned.

"This is an unprecedented incident. So harsh action is unavoidable in line with strict doping guidelines imposed by the International Olympic Committee," said Kim Tae-Yong, a spokesman for the Korea Sports Council (KSC).

Some 30 executive KGA members offered to resign after the Asian Games to assume responsibility for the most serious doping case to hit South Korea.

"We cannot avoid reproach for mismanagement. All executive mem-

bers of our association will tender their resignations after the games," So said.

But he added that tests should have been carried out earlier. "Because of the time limit, we could not replace the banned athletes. Tests should have been conducted at least three months earlier," he said.

South Korea, with its Bangkok delegation now reduced to 538, including 204 women, still hopes to pick up 70 medals to again beat Japan for second place in the medal standings behind China.

South Korea had expected at least one medal in the women's artistic gymnastics.

Wimbledon reports record profits

LONDON (AP) — Thanks to record crowds and the success of Britain's Tim Henman, this year's Wimbledon tennis championships produced a record profit of £33 million (\$52.8 million).

The Lawn Tennis Association announced Monday that the Wimbledon surplus rose by 6.7 per cent over last year, due to improved TV and merchandising income and record 13-day crowds of 424,998 — up 20,000 on the previous mark. The LTA said Wimbledon "held off the challenge" of soccer's World Cup, which was taking place in France at the same time in June and July.

The LTA reported increased sales of merchandise at the tournament featuring both Henman, who reached the semifinals, and fellow Brit Greg Rusedski, who withdrew with an ankle injury during his first-round match.

The LTA said the semifinal match between Henman and eventual champion Pete Sampras attracted 12 million television viewers in Britain, making it one of the top televised sporting events of the year.

It's been a bumper year for British tennis, with Henman and Rusedski both breaking into the top 10. Rusedski winning an elite "Super 9" tournament in Paris, Henman defeating Andre Agassi in the final of the Swiss Open, and Britain returning to the World Group of the Davis Cup for the first time since 1992.



U.S. tennis veteran John McEnroe jubilates after he defeated Guy Forget of France in the final of the ATP Senior Tour of Champions in Zagreb. McEnroe received \$30,000 for his victory. McEnroe won 6-1, 7-6 (7-4) (AFP photo)

Super Bowl champs Denver still perfect

KANSAS CITY (AFP) — The Denver Broncos are perfect through 10 games and playing like it.

Using offensive balance, depth and defense, the Broncos posted the Kansas City Chiefs, 30-7, turning their rivalry into a rout.

In the process, the Broncos became just the 16th National Football League team to start a season 10-0 and the first since the Washington Redskins in 1991.

Even without starting quarterback John Elway, who sat out with a rib injury, Denver continued to roll through the regular season. The Broncos have won 15 straight games and are two games ahead of the Jacksonville Jaguars for the best record in the AFC.

Terrell Davis rushed for 111 yards and a touchdown, remaining on pace to shatter the NFL single-season records for rushing yards and TDs. Bubba Brister, playing for Elway, completed 13-of-23 passes for 180 yards and added 53 yards on the ground — including a 38-yard touchdown run off a hootleg.

Even with most of the starters resting by the start of the fourth quarter, Denver was able to rout Kansas City, which was trying to avenge a home playoff loss to the Broncos last year and salvage its season.

Sydney 2000 organisers falling short on sponsors

SYDNEY (AFP) — The organisers of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games admitted Tuesday they were behind schedule in signing up corporate sponsors for the Games.

But in the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) annual report submitted to the parliament in Sydney's home state of New South Wales, organisers said they still expected to meet their revenue targets.

"Overall, total sponsorship revenue targets are expected to be achieved, however to date the receipt of sponsorship revenue has been later than budget due to delays in signing contracts," the report said.

Organisers hope to raise A\$874 million (\$550.6 million) through sponsorships, but less than two years from the Games had not even secured \$200 million of that total, a senior official said recently.

To date, the organising committee has signed up 13 Australian and 11 international businesses as "Team Millennium Sponsors," with each paying \$25-50 million.

A SOCOG spokesman said sponsors

had committed the funds but the formal signing of agreements had been delayed by legal discussions.

"It's no big deal. We're still proceeding along merrily but we've got to dot all the 'i's' and cross all the 't's,'" he said.

The annual report also revealed the salary bill for senior executives had more than doubled in the last year, even though only six additional executives had been hired.

In the last year, 23 executives were paid a total of \$5.73 million, compared to the \$2.62 million paid to 17 top-level executives a year earlier. Besides sponsorships, the organisers of the Sydney Games expect to raise some \$1.03 billion through the sale of various television rights, \$600 million from tickets, \$65 million from the sale of consumer products and another \$25 million from other sources.

World Cup flops Italy, Spain take centre stage

MILAN (AFP) — Italy take on Spain on Wednesday night in a friendly between the two biggest flops of the last World Cup.

Italy bowed out of the quarter-finals on penalties to hosts and eventual winners France, while Spain failed to make it past the group phase.

Both countries sacked their coaches in the aftermath of France 98 — Cesare Maldini making way for Dino Zoff and Javier Clemente being replaced by Jose Antonio Camacho.

On Wednesday they meet at Salerno's Arechi stadium, where a powerful firework exploded during Fiorentina's UEFA Cup tie against Swiss club Grasshopper on November 3, forcing the match to be abandoned.

Local officials have promised tight security as Italy seek to continue their solid start to the Zoff era, following Euro 2000 qualifying wins over Wales and Switzerland.

The Italian coach will have to do without injured

Juventus - ace Alessandro Del Piero, who scored both goals in the 2-0 win over the Swiss but who is now out for at least five months.

Del Piero joined World Cup centre-forward Christian Vieri on the casualty list, with the latest addition coming on Sunday when Inter's 20-year-old ace Nicola Ventola twisted knee ligaments.

Filippo Inzaghi will lead the attack alongside AS Roma's rising star Francesco Totti, with Parma's Enrico Chiesa as the only reserve.

Totti will not be short of familiar faces as Zoff has called up the entire Roma midfield — Luigi Di Biagio, Eusebio Di Francesco and Damiano Tommasi.

The midfield has become the weak link in the Italian team, a fact reflected in the number of foreign midfielders at top clubs Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan.

Spain will just be grateful to avoid defeat as they recover from a disastrous start to their Euro 2000

campaign — a humiliating 3-2 upset against Cyprus' semi-professionals which hastened Clemente's exit.

They came back to beat Russia 1-0 in a friendly and Israel 2-1 in a qualifier, and on Wednesday will again be looking to Real ace Raul.

But Camacho is without defender Fernando Hierro and midfielder Luis Enrique through injury and on Monday he lost Atletico Madrid midfielder Jordi Lardin, whose father is undergoing heart surgery this week.

Camacho, who has been busy raiding the ranks of Mallorca and Celta Vigo to put together this week's team, defended his selection.

"The reason why the squad has only one player each from Real Madrid and Barcelona is because they have so many foreigners in their teams," he said. "There is hardly anyone for me to choose from."

Kafelnikov unhappy with his form

MOSCOW (AFP) — World No. 10 Yevgeny Kafelnikov believes his form this season does not give him right to play in the ATP finals in Hanover later this month. 'Sport Express' daily said Tuesday.

"I am happy to play in such a significant tournament, but with the form I was showing this season I could not hope to appear there," said Russia's top player.

Kafelnikov said he was pleased to have clinched his berth at Hanover by winning his second consecutive Kremlin Cup tournament, but added: "If (Patrick) Rafter and (Richard) Krajicek had not refused to play in Hanover I would have finished the season 10th in the world."

He said he agreed with the words of Monica Seles, who said women's tennis has hit a purple patch, while the ATP tour was experiencing hard times.

"Men's tennis is in crisis now. Stefan Edberg has retired and Boris Becker does not often appear on the court and no shining individuals like Andre Agassi or Pete Sampras have appeared in the recent time."

He also said his countryman Marat Safin has what it takes to go all the way.

"Marat is a mature player already with his own style. He is respected by the world's strongest tennis players. He needs to get more experience to become one of the best. His physical and technical opportunities are almost limitless," said Kafelnikov.



Yevgeny Kafelnikov

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 461144	CINEMA TEL: 461144	CINEMA TEL: 5669238	CINEMA TEL: 5677420	CINEMA TEL: 5934793	CINEMA TEL: 5934793	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4621555
	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	
	Lawrence Fishburne & Sam Neill .. in	Julia Roberts & Richard Gere .. in	Comedian Mohammad Hunaidi .. in	CONCORD '1'	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria	Watch out for the new play
	EVENT HORIZON	PRETTY WOMAN	SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY	DEEP IMPACT	Antonio Banderas .. in	Comedian Mohammad Hunaidi .. in	
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				CONCORD '2'	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	
				BODYGUARD			
				Shows: 3:30, 5:30			

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

150 من الدول

LOCAL
SPORTS
SCENE

Street to be named after Nazmi Al Saeed

AMMAN — Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid Tuesday announced that the Amman Municipality Council will name one of the capital's streets after the late Nazmi Al Saeed, one of Jordan's pioneers in sports, who passed away last Friday. Hadid lauded Al Saeed, whose last post was head of the Sports Department at Al Ra'i Arabic daily and President of the Jordan Sport Media Federation, as a leading figure in Jordanian sports for the past 40 years.

Minister reviews Pan-Arab Games preparations

AMMAN — Head of the Ministerial Committee of the Pan-Arab Games Sheikh Issa Ben Rashid Al Khalifa and Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Sataan Al Hassan Wednesday will hold a press conference at Al Hussein Youth City to review preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games which will be held in Amman Aug. 15-31 1999. Meanwhile, Egyptian Minister of Higher Education Mufeed Shihab arrived here Tuesday to take part in the meetings of the Arab Ministerial Committee for Youth and Sports, which starts here today. The Committee has been formed by the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports to follow up on preparations for the Games. Officials from the Arab League, Assistant Secretary General Sweidan Daw and Youth and Sports Department Director Hani Mustafa, also arrived to take part in the meeting.

Handball team to leave for Dammam Friday

AMMAN — Jordan's national handball team Friday leaves for the Saudi city of Dammam to participate in West Asian Qualifiers for the World Handball Championship finals which will be held in Egypt next year. The team will be competing against Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain. The Kingdom's team will play two friendly matches against the Saudi teams of Al Nour and Khaleej before the qualifiers.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Bahraini
official lauds
Jordan's
preparations
for Pan-Arab
Games

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the Bahraini Youth Association Sheikh Issa Ben Rashid Al Khalifa Tuesday praised the government's efforts to ensure the success of the 9th Pan-Arab Games, which will be held Aug. 15-31, 1999.

In a statement to Jordan News Agency, Petra, after an inspection visit to Al Hassan Sports City in Irbid, Sheikh Issa expressed satisfaction with Jordan's preparations and lauded the efforts of His Majesty King Hussein. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah to ensure the success of the event.

Sheikh Issa was accompanied by Games Director Isam Arida, and members of a special Arab ministerial committee in charge of following up on the preparations — Sweidan Ali Daw, the Arab League's Assistant Secretary General, and Hani Mustafa, director of the Sports Affairs Department at the League of Arab States.

The committee members inspected the indoor multi-purpose sports hall, the Olympic swimming pool, the diving pool and the training halls.

Arida reviewed the preparations, including installations, residence of delegations, and setting up an information centre which will be catering for the needs of media personnel who will be covering the tournament activities.

Spanish seeds scattered as
Chase Championships begin

NEW YORK (AFP) — Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Conchita Martinez, triumphant in the Fed Cup in September, tumbled out of the first round Monday in the \$2 million Chase Championships.

Martinez, the seventh seed, fell prey to 25-year-old Belgian Dominique Van Roost in the opening match of the WTA season finale, 7-6 (9/7), 6-2.

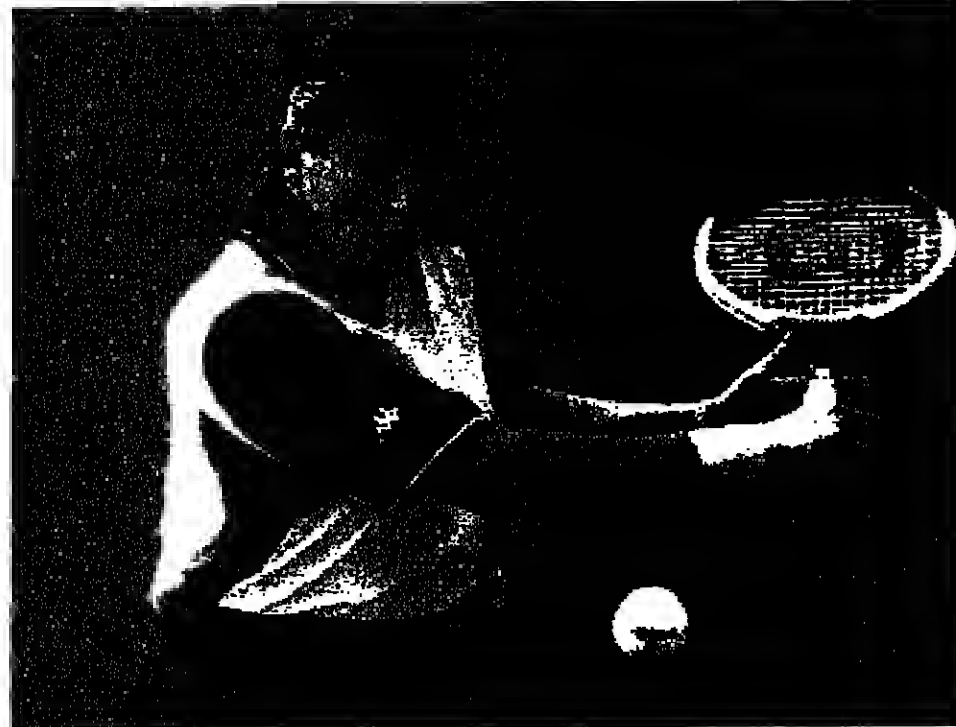
Romanian Irina Spirela then dismissed the fourth-seeded Sanchez 7-6 (8/6), 6-1.

It was Martinez's fourth opening-round loss at the event and dropped her all-time record in the tournament to just 6-10. Sanchez has lost in the opening round three of the last four years.

Spirela battled back from a 4-2 deficit in the first set and held serve to force a tiebreak. A pair of double faults by Sanchez enabled Spirela to race to a 6-2 lead, but the reigning French Open champion saved four set points to pull even. Spirela won the next point and claimed the set when Sanchez's backhand missed the line by the narrowest of margins.

The second set was all Spirela. She won the first three games, breaking Sanchez once in the process, and reeled off three more after Sanchez held for 3-1.

"It was a long season," Sanchez said of her inability to raise her game, even at the prospect of the winner's



Conchita Martinez

prize here. "I'm tired."

Van Roost needed a little luck to take the opening-set tiebreak, but needed to do little more than keep the ball in play as a frustrated Martinez collapsed in the second set.

Van Roost saved three set points in the ninth game, then missed her own chance when Martinez saved a set point in the 12th game and forced the tiebreaker.

Van Roost took a 5-2 lead, then 6-4, but committed three forehand errors on three set points before finally putting it away 9-7 on the fourth set point with a backhand

that clipped the net cord and landed on the line as Martinez watched.

"You don't expect these types of things," Van Roost said of the lucky bounce. "But it was very important."

With nothing to show for the 61-minute set other than a code violation she received for comments made on the way back to her chair, Martinez looked disinterested at the start of the second set.

"It was a little bit uphill after that," Martinez conceded. "I think I was thinking a lot about the first set and missing those opportunities."

Van Roost took full advantage, winning the first three games and again breaking Martinez's serve to go up 5-1. She closed out the match two games later with a forehand winner on her second match-point opportunity.

"She was kind of tired and she was making more unforced errors," Van Roost said.

Top seed and current World No. 1 Lindsay Davenport of the United States plays her opening-round match against Sandrine Testud of France on Wednesday.

Pressure takes its toll on Rafter

SYDNEY (AFP) — Pat Rafter has cut almost all his immediate commercial commitments to ensure he can concentrate on playing tennis when he returns from a month-long layoff in mid-December, his manager said Tuesday.

Steve Rafter, his manager and brother, said Pat over-committed himself in Australia earlier this year and too many tournaments throughout the season affected his performance.

"He won't be doing any press unless he has to," he's just trying to keep all that low-key and just relax," Steve Rafter said.

"He needs to cut it back and try to keep things a little bit sane for himself."

Rafter is taking a break at his home in Bermuda before returning to Australia for

Christmas following his most successful year on the ATP Tour, which included six singles titles including his defence of the U.S. Open.

A knee injury brought the 25-year-old's season to a premature close earlier this month, forcing him to relinquish his chance to become the first Australian to claim the No. 1 world ranking since Davis Cup captain John Newcombe in 1974.

He won't be stepping on a tennis court or picking up a racket during his rest.

"Last year, he was flat out because he came back and he had charity and press and sponsor commitments," Steve Rafter said.

"So this time he's taking a clean month off where he's not going to do anything, just doing his own thing."

He said Pat was disappointed

at the early end to the season but "it's not heart-breaking for him. No. 1 is great but it's not the be all and end all to him."

"He's not dwelling on the missed opportunity but rather just appreciating the fact that he can rest up and be fresh."

Pat Rafter would definitely play at the Sydney International in early January as a leadup to the Australian Open in Melbourne starting January 18, but was undecided about the South Australian Open beginning January 4, his brother said.

"Performance of his knee would dictate the exact schedule."

"He's going to have another test to check it out, an X-ray of the cartilage around the knee. I think it's just a little bit of wear and tear to cartilage."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Juventus watch Van Hooijdonk

NOTTINGHAM (AFP) — Italian giants Juventus watched Pierre van Hooijdonk's return to goalkeeping ways with Nottingham Forest on Monday night. The Serie A side had a representative at the City Ground when Van Hooijdonk scored in the 2-2 Premiership draw with East Midlands rivals Derby. It was the transfer-listed Dutchman's first goal since he brought his three-month strike to an end. Forest boss Dave Bassen confirmed: "Juventus had someone watching the game. I don't know if they were watching Pierre or not but there was certainly a Juventus representative in the stadium." Bassen is keen to offload the six million pounds (\$9 million) rated striker and use the cash to strengthen his relegation-threatened squad, currently third from bottom in the English top flight.

Former Olympic champion Danek dies

PRAGUE (AFP) — Former Olympic champion Ludvik Danek, who became the first discus thrower to smash the 65 metre barrier, died after suffering a heart attack here Tuesday. Danek, 61, won gold in the 1972 Olympics in Munich, silver in Tokyo in 1964 and bronze in Mexico in 1968. The dual world record holder retired in 1978 but he retained his links with athletics, assisting the Czech Republic's Olympic Committee and the national athletics' association.

Cambodian Asian Games team
strapped for cash

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's team for the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok next month is seriously underfunded and unlikely to win a medal, sports officials said Tuesday. The team of 70 competitors and 33 officials has been promised government funds but has yet to see the money, the secretary general for the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia, Meas Sarin, said. He said the team would compete in 11 sports at an estimated cost of \$2,300 a day. Other than football, the highest representation would be in wushu. "The government has promised to give us the money but so far it's only on paper," Meas Sarin said. He said he was not optimistic the team would win any medals because of insufficient training and a lack of financial support.

Indonesia's top swimmer skips
Asian Games

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia's top woman swimmer Catherine Surya will miss the Bangkok Asian Games because of a thigh injury sustained in training in Australia. "Her coach said the injury is quite serious, and that she has to be removed from the list of athletes who will go to Bangkok," Lukman Niode, head of the technical commission of the Indonesian Swimming Association (PRSI), told the Antara news agency. Surya won the gold medal in the

100m freestyle at the Southeast Asian Games here last year. She had been hoping for gold medals at the Bangkok Games in the 100m and 200m butterfly. Indonesia's hopes at the Asian Games, which start on December 6, now rest on U.S.-based Rita Mariani in the 100m and 200m breaststroke.

Mets reinstate Phillips as manager

NEW YORK (AFP) — Steve Phillips was reinstated as general manager of the New York Mets Monday, eight days after taking a leave of absence to attend to personal problems and a possible claim of sexual harassment. Phillips, 51, was reinstated after a 50-day suspension for a sexual harassment claim with a former Florida-based Mets employee who has threatened to file a sexual harassment suit. Now, Phillips is to return to his job immediately but continue to undergo counseling. "We're an organization like most that depends on humans. We're human and humans make mistakes," said Dave Howard, the team's senior vice president of business and legal affairs. "We're not concerned with our image as we are with helping Steve." Howard said that no lawsuit has been formally filed against Phillips or the team, but he would not discuss any details of the case. Team officials last week said that there was "absolutely no basis" to the charge of harassment and would defend Phillips in any lawsuit.

Sanchez banned for 2 years

MEXICO (AFP) — Mexican Olympic and World Championship walker German Sanchez was banned for two years for taking drugs, sources here said. Sanchez tested positive for the anabolic steroid nandrolone at a 50-kilometre race in Mexico on April 5. He is believed to be preparing an appeal against the International Amateur Athletic Federation action. Sanchez, 32, represented Mexico at the 1992 and 1996 Olympics and several World Championships but failed to win a medal.

Injured Shearer back in two weeks

NEWCASTLE (AFP) — England captain Alan Shearer could be back in action less than a fortnight after picking up the hamstring injury which put him out of Wednesday's friendly with the Czech Republic. The 28-year-old Newcastle United striker underwent a scan on his right hamstring on Tuesday after being pulled off at half-time during the 1-1 draw with Sheffield Wednesday at St. James' Park on Saturday. The examination revealed that the injury was relatively minor. "Alan has had his scan and it showed just a very slight tear," said a Newcastle spokesman. "It seems to be a very minor injury, which is obviously good news for Alan and the club." Newcastle do not play again until they make the trip to Everton on Monday, November 23, but that game could come just too early for Shearer, the Magpies' leading goalscorer with eight so far this season, and it is more likely that he will return against Wimbledon five days later.

Popov hopes drug forum will clear
Olympic drug doubts

SYDNEY (AFP) — Russian swimming great Alexandre Popov has called on the Olympic movement to speed up attempts to finally define what is a banned drug.

The International Olympic Committee is holding a drugs forum next February to find a way through the legal minefield posed by drug-testing procedures which are increasingly challenged by the lawyers.

The forum was called after IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch questioned whether Spanish riders who deserted the Tour de France cycling race in July were fleeing possible sanctions for drug use.

The Tour was engulfed by a drugs scandal when police raids uncovered widespread use of Erythropoietin (EPO) — the hormone that boosts red blood cell production so important for stamina.

"We have got to the point in sport now when it's difficult to say what exactly is a drug," Popov said Tuesday.

"We've got to define exactly what you can take," added the Russian who has been based in Australia for the last six years.

However, Popov, who turned 27 on Monday, believes Olympic winners do not need drugs.

"You have got to experience the pain of training, knowing that extra push to win a gold medal," said the four-time Olympic gold medalist who was voted onto the IOC co-ordination commission overlooking the Sydney Games at Atlanta.

Popov had an unhappy time in Atlanta, which he described as the U.S. championships, and hopes Sydney can make foreign athletes more welcome in 2000.

But he admits his quest for an unprecedented third Olympic sprint swimming gold medal at Sydney has been made harder by the introduction of semifinals, instead of the usual qualifying system of heats and

finals. "It will be harder than normal but Sydney will be hard anyway. I'm getting old," he said.

But he was not worried about a new rule on false starts which means any swimmer who dives before the gun will be immediately disqualified instead of having a second chance.

"I'm probably the slowest starter anyway, so it shouldn't be a problem," he said.

Popov, who survived a Moscow street stabbing after the Atlanta Games, held out little hope for training future generations of Australian swimmers.

"I could give them some of my experience, tips on technique but I couldn't motivate swimmers," he

said. And after the Sydney Games he said he would probably take his wife Daria and son Vladimir to

Switzerland. "I've been very happy in Australia but I like the idea of Switzerland," he told AFP.

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Timely Iraqi backtrack sparks suspicions that Saddam was tipped off

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Iraq's timely backtrack on U.N. arms inspections has raised suspicions here that President Saddam Hussein was tipped off that the launch of U.S. air strikes was only minutes away.

U.S. officials say they have no evidence that Washington's war plans were betrayed and they note all Baghdad had to do was to tune in to CNN to hear that a U.S. attack was imminent.

"I don't know of any evidence that they were tipped off beyond the tips you could get from watching CNN, which is not to say they have might not have been," a U.S. official said.

But the Pentagon in particular is taking a close look at what happened to see if the air strikes ordered Friday night by President Bill Clinton were compromised by a security breach, a defence official said.

The strikes, set for Saturday, were less than an hour away when the news came that Baghdad was sending a letter to the United Nations promising unconditional cooperation

with U.N. arms inspections.

"Without a doubt there's either a high level of coincidence or it may be an indication he might have had real information," the defence official said.

"What you look at is to see if you can do it better the next time if there are some sort of operational security issues," the official said.

The Pentagon believed that if its forces in the Gulf struck Saturday they could still have some tactical advantage because Baghdad had not yet dispersed all its forces, leaving them more vulnerable to attack, the Pentagon official said.

At the same time, though, there was intense speculation in the media that an attack could come at any time. And there were other diplomatic signals as well that Washington was getting ready to act.

Questions about a possible attack were raised at a Friday afternoon closed-door session of the U.N. Security Council.

An aide to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan received a call in the meeting at 6:15 p.m. from a

Pentagon reporter advising him that a decision had been made to launch air strikes, U.N. sources said.

The aide passed the information to Annan who then confronted the U.S. representative Peter Burleigh, asking him if it was true and expressing concern about the safety of remaining U.N. personnel in Iraq, the source said.

Russian Ambassador Sergei Lavrov also asked Burleigh if it were true that a decision had been made to attack, the sources said.

Burleigh refused to answer the questions, but the more than 30 people in the room were left with the strong impression that an attack was imminent, the sources said.

The meeting, devoted to discussing the contents of an appeal to Iraq, broke up at 9:00 p.m. shortly after Burleigh informed the members that he had new instructions and there was no longer any time to send a letter to Baghdad.

As he left the session, Annan told reporters that "events on the ground may be running away from us."

Peace activists protest Jewish settler outposts

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli peace activists demanded Tuesday that the army dismantle seven Jewish settlement outposts on remote West Bank hills and said they would appeal to the supreme court if the order was not given by the end of the week.

The outposts, consisting of several trailers each, have been set up since last month's Mideast peace summit during which Israel agreed to withdraw from 13 per cent of the West Bank by the end of January.

Jewish settler leaders said they have been setting up the outposts because they do not want the land to fall into Palestinian hands in the future.

They were encouraged earlier this week by Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon who said settlers "should move, should run,

should grab more hills, expand the territory."

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said Monday that Sharon's statement served to "undermine the trust and confidence" needed to make peace.

Sharon's ministry, in turn, said in a statement Tuesday that it was "taken aback" by Rubin's comments, saying Sharon's point had been the need to strengthening existing settlements.

However, the Israeli daily Haaretz said Sharon's call to seize hilltops appeared to be contradicting a quiet pledge by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the United States more than a year ago that settlements would only be expanded to "immediately contiguous" areas. This would exclude the settling of areas several hills removed from the nearest built-up land, Haaretz said.

Herzog starts visit

(Continued from page 1)

Herzog said such development should start as soon as possible, adding that "we should not wait until the region is completely stable."

The talks, which were described by the Crown Prince as "useful and constructive," also focused on bilateral relations, characterised by strong financial and development cooperation.

"Jordan and Germany have close relations, one of the best conceivable relationships, not only at the diplomatic level, but also in terms of the network of contacts between us," said Herzog, whose address was translated from German into English.

According to official figures, the Kingdom is the largest recipient of German aid per capita.

Herzog added that his country intends to continue focusing on cooperation with Jordan because of the Kingdom's pivotal role in advancing regional peace.

Later, at a dinner banquet in honour of the German president and his wife, Prince Hassan hailed the friendship between the two countries, expressing Jordanians' pride in the bilateral ties of close cooperation.

Recalling the "crucial support provided by Germany during the critical period of the Gulf War in 1991," the Crown Prince said Jordan was "particularly relieved that the most

recent Gulf crisis has been peacefully resolved during the last few days."

He called for a regional code of conduct, stressing the urgent need for a comprehensive approach for cooperation in security, economics and culture, in the Middle East or West Asian region.

Reiterating Jordan's "firm commitment to human rights," Prince Hassan expressed to his guests the Kingdom's impatience "to achieve balance progress in all their dimensions."

The Crown Prince and HRH Princess Sarvath earlier received the German President and Mrs. Herzog, Prince Hassan, and on behalf of King Hussein, decorated the German president with the Al Hussein Ben Ali Medal.

The German president, his wife, and their accompanying delegation are scheduled to stay in Jordan until Thursday.

Today, Herzog's agenda includes the inauguration of a wastewater treatment plant in the northern governorate of Irbid, where he will also receive a honorary doctorate from the Jordan University for Science and Technology.

Mrs. Herzog is scheduled to tour the Baqa'a refugee camp and local NGOs.

On Thursday morning, after an inter-cultural roundtable, the two will leave for a short visit of the rose-red city of Petra and the Red Sea port of Aqaba.

Pollard's bid to block prisoner release rejected

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's Supreme Court rejected an appeal Tuesday to prevent Israel from releasing Palestinian prisoners until an American who spied for the Jewish state is released as well.

The appeal was submitted Monday on behalf of Jonathan Pollard, who is serving a life sentence in a federal prison in North Carolina. Pollard was arrested outside the Israeli embassy in Washington in 1985 and convicted of turning over secret documents to Israel while serving as a naval intelligence officer.

His case was highlighted recently when Israel tried to hinge its agreement to a U.S.-brokered peace accord with the Palestinians on Pollard's release. U.S. President Bill Clinton said he would review Pollard's case.

Pollard's wife Esther said Tuesday the court had failed to recognise a commitment she said was given by the Israeli government to ensure her husband's release as part of the deal peace.

"The fact is that we had a clear promise from the prime minister and the cabinet that not a single terrorist would go free until Jonathan's release was assured," she said.



PRO-OCALAN RALLY: Kurdish women amongst some 4,000 Kurdish demonstrators who came from all over Western Europe, shout slogans during a march in downtown Rome in support of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan on Tuesday. Ocalan was arrested in Rome Thursday when he stepped off a plane from Moscow where he was seeking political asylum (AP photo)

Suspected Islamists step up attacks on Algerian civilians; 8 people killed

ALGIERS (AFP) — Suspected Islamists murdered eight people and wounded 10 others in an overnight attack at Khemis Miliana, some 100 kilometres from Algiers, security forces said Tuesday.

Security forces said a "terrorist group" carried out Monday night's "cowardly assassinations" in the Ain Defla region west of the capital, but gave no further details of the raid.

Government forces had already "launched an intensive search operation for those who carried out this criminal attack," an official statement said.

The term "terrorists" is used by President Liamine Zerroual's government for armed Islamists who launched a bloody insurgency after the January 1992 cancellation of the second round of general elections the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was set to win.

Press reports on Tuesday said that a woman was tortured and hacked to death on Sunday when she was caught at a false roadblock put up by Islamists in the Tissemsilt region bordering on Ain Defla.

Several other people were injured when the guerrillas manning the Islamist roadblock at Missouma, Southwest of the capital, opened fire, Liberté and Al Khabar dailies reported.

The woman who was murdered fell out of a van when the driver tried to force his way through the ambush. The newspapers said she was tortured, decapitated and then hacked limb from limb.

Establishing false checkpoints modelled on those of the security forces has long been a tactic used by the armed Islamists, who have often targeted civilians in a terror campaign alongside their fight against the army and police.

In all, at least 60,000 people are estimated to have been killed since the start of the uprising and the subsequent outlawing of the FIS.

After a period of relative calm, violence has escalated in Algeria over the last week, especially in the area around the capital.

On Thursday, 18 people were killed by suspected Islamists in Moussa Abderrahmane, around 100 kilometres west of Algiers.

Five women and eight children under 12 years old had their throats cut, radio reports said.

A local government official was among four people abducted while driving the same day near Kadaria, 80 kilometres west of the capital.

The body of one of these people and a torched vehicle was later found, according to press reports.

Also Thursday, 15 armed Islamists were killed during a military operation at Djerrah, in the Lakhdaria hills west of Algiers.

On Saturday, an armed group murdered a retired lieutenant colonel in front of his house in Tizi Ouzou, the chief town in the eastern Kabylie district.

Armed groups staged several attacks Sunday, according to press reports.

Two people were seriously wounded near the south-eastern town of Batna when two bombs exploded on a mountain road, the Al Khabar paper said.

Security forces killed two armed Islamists near Reghaia, 30 kilometres east of the capital, the El Watan daily said.

Al Khabar also reported that 24 armed Islamists, including a chief, were arrested in M'sila as the group was preparing to carry out attacks.

Bahais warn of fresh persecution in Iran

PARIS (R) — French members of the Bahai faith said on Tuesday that fellow believers in Iran were the target of a new wave of persecution, caught in a power struggle between reformists and hardliner Islamists.

"When there is a struggle for power, it is always the minorities who are caught in between and become scapegoats," Foud Saberan, a Frenchman of Iranian origin, told a news conference marking the 100th anniversary of an organised French Bahai community.

He said Iran's 350,000 Bahais were persecuted by Islamists seeking to undermine President Mohammad Khatami, a moderate Shiite cleric. "The president is clearly a humanist who favours protecting religious minorities. His overtures to Iranian Christians are unprecedented in Iranian history. Because of that, hardliners are trying to strangle the Bahais," Saberan said.

Khatami plans to visit France in February, his first visit to a European country since being elected in 1997. The French Bahais said they planned to appeal to him then in favour of co-religionists in Iran, including several sentenced to death.

The Bahai faith originated from a Muslim splinter group in Iran 150 years ago. It claims six million members worldwide, including in mainly Muslim Iran, where it is officially termed "a misleading and wayward sect."

Bahais abroad say more than 200 members of their faith have been executed in Iran for their religious beliefs since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The French Bahais accused Iranian authorities last month of launching a major crackdown against Bahais in 14 cities, arresting 36 people and looting more than 500 homes.

Those arrested were professors and teachers conducting "open university"-type courses for young Bahais, said by their French fellow believers to be banned by the authorities from attending universities.

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Egypt to renovate Islamic monuments

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian government will release \$71 million to restore 161 threatened monuments in Cairo's old Islamic section, a government newspaper reported Tuesday.

The 18-month restoration project, which the cabinet is expected to adopt this month, would be carried out in four stages, Al Ahram said.

Phase one will see the restoration of 43 monuments, another 27 will be fixed up in the second stage, 37 in the third phase and 39 others in the final stage.

At present, more than 15 monuments are undergoing renovation, Al Ahram said. One of the area's gems, the 18th century Musafirkhana palace, with its Ottoman architecture, was destroyed in a fire Oct. 22.

The Islamic quarter contains 174 Islamic monuments, seven of which are in private hands, a report submitted to the cabinet said. In addition, 245 families

live either in Islamic monuments or in adjacent buildings, the report said.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's world heritage committee will discuss at its Dec. 2-7 meeting in Kyoto funding a three-year programme to rehabilitate Islamic Cairo.

Cairo's old Islamic section has been on the committee's world heritage site list since 1979.

Another government newspaper reported Tuesday that the culture ministry had sent a report to the U.S. Congress "refuting allegations that the Egyptian government was deliberately neglecting the restoration of Coptic (minority Egyptian Orthodox Christian) monuments."

"The government recently allocated \$7.4 million to restore the Hanging Church" in Old (Coptic) Cairo, which was seriously damaged by the 1992 earthquake, Al Ahram said.

Man with 90 wives seeks 10 more

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A 74-year-old Indian wants to marry 10 more times to notch up a record 100 wives. Udayanath Dakshin Ray from the eastern state of Orissa told the Asian Age he would not stop unless he added 10 women to his "bevy of maharanis" [queens]. "I must have 100 wives before I die. In fact, I know I will," Ray said he believed in monogamy as a young man but his first marriage turned sour after his in-laws forcibly took their daughter away from him. Ray's attempt to win her back failed so he started his tale of "revenge."

Forced friendliness object of lawsuit

LOS ANGELES (R) — Five women employees of a major U.S. supermarket chain say they are being sexually harassed by customers because their employer forces them to smile at patrons and make eye contact. The women said on Monday they have filed discrimination charges against Safeway with federal and state fair employment agencies to stop the practice — as a first step in a planned lawsuit against the company. In their complaint, they allege that a strictly enforced customer service programme forces Safeway employees to smile and make eye contact with customers and that has led to a higher incidence of sexual harassment.

Presidential candidate attacks TV host

ALMATY (R) — A Kazakhstan television interviewer won a floral tribute when he compared a presidential candidate to a drunk — the offended politician hurled a vase of flowers at him during a live broadcast. Gani Kasymov, one of seven challengers to President Nursultan Nazarbayev in an election due in January, grabbed the microphone during a late-night talk show when the host compared his surprise decision to stand to that of an unpredictable drunk. "You probably think you deserve flowers for that question," Kasymov said before letting fly. His aim was poor, however, and the host calmly brooght the programme to an immediate end.

Bungling drug smugglers sentenced

LONDON (R) — A drugs smuggler and two accomplices whose lorry got stuck in a London tunnel during a police surveillance operation were sentenced to long prison sentences on Monday. The three were arrested in London's Blackwall tunnel in February after they failed to notice their lorry was too tall to make it through the passage. They were found with 80 kilograms of heroin with a street value of \$10.03 million. The incident brought large parts of London's heavily-congested road network to a halt.

Tombstones pave Athens sidewalks

ATHENS (AP) — In Greece's version of death row — just a short stroll from parliament, the tombstone of Aggelia Koutelakis was part of the sidewalk in central Syntagma square until Tuesday when the marble slab was pried up. The hasty removal followed a public outcry from media reports that tombstones taken from the capital's public cemeteries were allegedly being used to fix the square's marble sidewalks. City hall officials denied that such slabs were used in Syntagma, although they admitted the municipality recycled marble graves that were no longer being used. "We never use marble with inscriptions," Deputy Mayor Ilias Katsos told a television station.

Prayers, flowers mark Luxor massacre anniversary

LUXOR (R) — Muslim and Buddhist prayers were offered and flowers laid at the temple in Luxor on Tuesday where Islamists slaughtered 58 foreign tourists one year ago.

The ambassadors of Japan and Switzerland put red and white wreaths at the Queen Hatshepsut temple to mark the first anniversary of the massacre, in which four Egyptians were also killed.

"We found it appropriate to commemorate the massacre as we are the two nations which had the most victims," Swiss Ambassador Blaise Godet told Reuters before he flew for Luxor.

"We very simply wanted to pay tribute to the victims, to

walk around the temple and be in spirit with the victims." Last year, Islamists turned the 3,500-year-old temple into a blood bath as they shot and hacked the tourists in the bloodiest attack in Egypt since Islamists groups launched an armed struggle for a purist Islamic state in 1992.

Egyptian official media mostly ignored the anniversary.

The government wants to put the incident behind it and has kept up an aggressive campaign to lure tourists back to Egypt.

The attack devastated Egypt's tourism sector for a while, but officials and tour operators say recovery is

under way.

The government has stopped releasing monthly figures for tourist arrivals since June, when Egypt had 250,000 visitors, compared to 299,000 in June 1997.

Egypt earned \$3.7 billion from tourism in fiscal 1996/7 (July-June).

Economy Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali has said the attack cost the economy about \$500 million. A Western economist put the damage at about double that.

Foreign countries have offered greater security cooperation to Egypt, which has tightened security at tourist sites.

Egyptian guards armed with

machine guns stood watch at the temple and from surrounding hills as hundreds of tourists milled around the site under a clear blue sky and in mild weather.

Some tourists spontaneously joined prayers at the temple by Egyptian and Japanese officials from the local operator of the Japan Travel Bureau which organised some of the victims' tours.

"In Japanese we said a special three-minute prayer for the dead and then we proceeded to the temple and offered the flowers," said Masamichi Nakano, the operator's general manager.

"We prayed as Muslims and Buddhists but the purpose was

the same," he said. "It was for the victims and to avoid such incidents in the future." A Buddhist priest arrived in the afternoon to pray.

The victims included 35 Swiss and 10 Japanese. British, German and Colombian tourists were also killed in the attack, carried out by six gunmen disguised as policemen.

The Gamaa Islamiya (Islamic Group), the largest Islamist group fighting the government, claimed responsibility.

But political analysts say the killing weakened the group, eroding its support and sharpening internal disputes.